

# KARL KORSCH



## READER



PRINCIPLES, PROPOSITIONS &  
DISCUSSIONS  
FOR LAND & FREEDOM

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD TO THE 'ANARCHIVE'

**"Anarchy is Order!"**

*'I must Create a System or be enslav'd by  
another Man's.  
I will not Reason & Compare: my business  
is to Create'  
(William Blake)*

During the 19th century, anarchism has developed as a result of a social current which aims for freedom and happiness. A number of factors since World War I have made this movement, and its ideas, disappear little by little under the dust of history.

After the classical anarchism – of which the Spanish Revolution was one of the last representatives—a 'new' kind of resistance was founded in the sixties which claimed to be based (at least partly) on this anarchism. However this resistance is often limited to a few (and even then partly misunderstood) slogans such as 'Anarchy is order', 'Property is theft',...

Information about anarchism is often hard to come by, monopolised and intellectual; and therefore visibly disappearing. The 'anarchive' or 'anarchist archive' Anarchy is Order ( in short **A.O**) is an attempt to make the '**principles, propositions and discussions**' of this tradition available again for anyone it concerns. We believe that these texts are part of our own heritage. They don't belong to publishers, institutes or specialists.

These texts thus have to be available for all anarchists and other people interested. That is one of the conditions to give anarchism a new impulse, to let the 'new anarchism' outgrow the slogans. This is what makes this project relevant for us: we must find our roots to be able to renew ourselves. We have to learn from the mistakes of our socialist past. History has shown that a large number of the anarchist ideas remain

standing, even during the most recent social-economic developments.

**‘Anarchy Is Order’ does not make profits, everything is spread at the price of printing- and papercosts. This of course creates some limitations for these archives.**

**Everyone is invited to spread along the information we give . This can be done by copying our leaflets, printing texts from the CD (collecting all available texts at a given moment) that is available or copying it, e-mailing the texts to friends and new ones to us,... Become your own anarchivists!!!**

(Be aware though of copyright restrictions. We also want to make sure that the anarchist or non-commercial printers, publishers and authors are not being harmed. Our priority on the other hand remains to spread the ideas, not the ownership of them.)

The anarchivists offers these texts hoping that values like **freedom, solidarity and direct action** get a new meaning and will be lived again; so that the struggle continues against the

*“...demons of flesh and blood, that sway scepters down here;  
and the dirty microbes that send us dark diseases and wish to  
squash us like horseflies;  
and the will-‘o-the-wisp of the saddest ignorance.”*

(L-P. Boon)

The rest depends as much on you as it depends on us. Don’t mourn, Organise!

Comments, questions, criticism, cooperation can be sent to [A.O@advalvas.be](mailto:A.O@advalvas.be).

A complete list and updates are available on this address, new texts are always

**WELCOME!!**

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# KARL KORSCH: A MARXIST FRIEND OF ANARCHISM

By A.R. Giles-Peters



# Karl Korsch

Gesamtausgabe  
Recht, Geist und Kultur  
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Karl Korsch (1886-1961), who is today being rediscovered by the "new left," was one of the major theoreticians of left communism. Of the three major theoreticians of 1920's Marxism - Gramsci, Lukacs and Korsch - Korsch is at once the one of most interest to anarchists and also, I believe, the superior Marxist.

Marxists of the 1920s have an interest for anarchists of a quite different order from those of any other period. The reason is that for a brief period after the First World War Marxism was a revolutionary doctrine in a way that it had not been since Marx nor has been again (leaving aside its use as an ideology of basically peasant nationalist revolutions.) In that brief period the Russian Revolution served as a rallying point for left-wing intellectuals of all shades of red and black, and these joined with anarchist workers and socialist workers of a syndicalist stamp to form the basis of the new parties of the Third International. Except in Spain, anarchist and syndicalist organizations everywhere lost ground to these new parties which rapidly evolved into bureaucratic state socialist organizations interested in the control of the working-class movement. During this evolution those anarchists, syndicalists and left socialists who held true to the initial promise of the Russian Revolution were isolated, weeded out and kept by the party's superior organization from the access to the working class that alone could sustain a revolutionary movement. Karl Korsch was one of the casualties of this process.

Although Gramsci had been a supporter of workers' councils, and in prison tended to associate with syndicalists, he did not become a left opponent of the Comintern. The reasons would seem to be that, firstly, the Italian problem was not revolution but defense against fascism; secondly, Gramsci was opposed to the abstract leftism of Bordiga who was connected with the German ultra-left; and thirdly, Gramsci's imprisonment kept him out of harm's way and isolated him from the convulsions of the international movement. The cases of Korsch and Lukacs are much clearer.

Lukacs was a member of a marginal bourgeois group (the Jewish intelligentsia) in a semi-feudal country (Hungary). Prior to 1917 his interests were primarily literary although he had been influenced by Szabo - an intellectual who took his syndicalism from Sorel. Not surprisingly his initial position as a revolutionary was utopian and abstractly ultra-left; his later evolution to a "right-wing," almost social-democratic, position (Blum Theses 1929) was quite reasonable given that Hungary only ceased to be feudal in 1945. On the other hand his accommodation to Stalinism, however partial and "insincere" it is alleged to have been, is hard to forgive.

Korsch's knowledge of the workers' movement was, at the end of the war, of an altogether different order from Lukacs. Educated at several universities in economics, law, sociology and philosophy, he became a doctor of jurisprudence in 1911 and went to England where he joined the Fabian society and studied the syndicalist and Guild socialist movements. He was already opposed to the Marxist orthodoxy which defined socialism as the negation of capitalism by nationalization, saw the coming of socialism as inevitable and conceived Marxism as a pure "science" separate from the practice of the workers' movement. His opposition to this orthodoxy turned Korsch's attention to the Fabian's concern with the preparation of individuals for socialism through education and to the syndicalists' stress on the conscious activity of the workers as the basis both of the revolution and the management of a socialist economy. From his very earliest articles he stressed the role of consciousness in the struggle for socialism and the importance of working class self-activity. After the war he developed his ideas further by working out schemes for socialization coupled with workers' control.



At the beginning of the 1914-18 war Korsch was conscripted in the German army and went to the front, but he was against the war and, although wounded twice, never carried a gun himself. He welcomed the formation of the anti-war socialist movement and after the war joined the Independent Socialist Party (USPD). Still opposed to "orthodox" and "revisionist" Marxism, at that time he believed that a third current, "Practical socialism," was being formed and was represented by Luxemburg and Lenin. For this tendency the transition to socialism was a "conscious human act." Korsch became sufficiently Leninist by 1924 to see the revolutionary act as the act of, a mass revolutionary party but he still saw the party as a means to an end of a direct democracy of workers' councils. Although he went with the majority of the USPD into the communist party (KPD) he argued against Moscow's twenty-one conditions of affiliation; in particular he opposed the demand for a parallel illegal organization which would be out of the control of the party masses.

Despite his reservations, Korsch rapidly rose to be a leader of the KPD. He became editor of the party journal and a deputy in the Reichstag. This he owed to his theoretical preeminence for, although he had always rejected social-democratic "Marxism," he had been led in his legal studies to see society and the economy as the basis of legal systems and, during the brief liberation of Marxism from orthodoxy his previous philosophical, sociological and economic studies served him well. However, this situation soon changed; after 1923 he was obviously on the left-wing of the KPD; in 1924 his 1923 book *Marxism and Philosophy* was denounced at the executive meeting of the communist international and he

was removed from his editorial position in 1925; in 1926 he was excluded from the KPD. According to Mattick, Korsch always had a critical attitude to the emerging Russian state but in the early period of the Russian revolution, when all the forces of reaction were arrayed against it, he believed that a revolutionary had to support it. Furthermore, although the Russian revolution had to be a capitalist one, i.e., its mission was to develop capital and a proletariat in underdeveloped Russia, it still had a revolutionary significance if the break in -the world system could be extended westward into Germany. Once Russia had reached its accommodation with Germany and other capitalist powers and had turned the Communist International into a foreign instrument of its national purposes, a revolutionary had to break with Russia. Thus in 1926 he joined the "Resolute Left" - an ultra-left group opposed to the new Russian bureaucracy and its German ally, the KPD. Even earlier he had been in contact with Sapranov of the "Democratic Centralism" group within the Russian party who believed that the Russian proletariat should break with the Bolsheviks. (Korsch's views on these questions can be found in the article in French by Mattick. Very similar views are to be found in *Society of the Spectacle* by Guy Debord in the section "The Proletariat as subject and as representation.")

Unfortunately Korsch's political articles on Bolshevism are not yet available in English (1). On the other hand we have most of his articles on Marxist theory and these make plain why the split had to occur. In his 1923 work *Marxism and Philosophy* Korsch claimed to be attempting to "restore" the correct Marxian position on this question in the same way, and for the same revolutionary purposes, as Lenin had restored the

Marxist position on the state in *State and Revolution* (a pamphlet denounced as "anarchist" by the other Bolsheviks). In fact what he did was to show how Marxism had become an ideology of the workers' movement: for Korsch Marxism, whether in its pre-1848 "philosophical" form or its post-1848 "scientific" form, was neither a science nor a philosophy, it was either the theoretical consciousness of a proletarian revolutionary practice or it was a "Marxist" ideology unrelated to practice or, concealing a counter-revolutionary practice. All this was placed in the context of violent attack on the orthodox Marxism of Kautsky, and hence, said Korsch, was against the second International and for the third International. In saying these things, Korsch trampled on all that Marxist orthodoxy, German or Russian, social-democratic or Bolshevik, held dear.

In 1930 when Korsch returned to the question to write an anti-critique he was clear on what had happened. Unbeknown to him, he had been "guilty" of deviation from the emerging Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy based on Kautsky and Plekhanov. Thus for the Russians there was a materialist Marxist philosophy (given in Lenin's *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*) and also a Marxist science which, following Kautsky, had to be brought to the proletariat from outside by bourgeois intellectuals (as expounded in Lenin's *What is to be Done?*). Thus what Korsch had thought to be a new, third, current in Marxism was just a new ideological variant of the old Marxist orthodoxy. The special features of Bolshevism were merely a reflection of the special tasks which the ideology was to perform in undeveloped Russia. This discovery of the ideological nature of communist theory and the collapse and the collapse of all revolutionary

Marxist workers' movements in the face of counter-revolution, implied a re-evaluation of Marxism.

For Korsch Marxist theory was the general expression of the existing revolutionary movement. In counter-revolutionary periods Marxism could be developed further in its scientific content but once Marxism was developed as a pure science separate from its connection with the proletarian movement it tended to become an ideology. Thus the link between theory and practice was not anything to do with the application of a science but meant simply that theory was the articulated consciousness of a practical revolutionary movement. To re-establish the link required the existence of a proletarian revolutionary movement and the purging of Marxism of all its ideological and bourgeois elements. The only movement which answered to the description in the Europe of the 1930's was the Spanish anarchist movement and so Korsch, while continuing his work on Marxist theory, also studied Bakunin and the anarchist movement.

In his 1923 work Korsch had stressed that early Marxism was a continuation in a new context of the revolutionary theory of the bourgeoisie, principally of the German idealist tradition. In his 1930 "Thesis on Hegel and the Revolution" he returned to this question and re-evaluated both Hegelian and Marxist theory. Hegelian philosophy was not just the revolutionary philosophy of the bourgeoisie; it was the philosophy of the final phase of the bourgeois revolution and hence also a philosophy of the restoration. Thus the dialectical method is not the purely revolutionary principle that the Marxists imagined. Thus also the creation of a theory of the proletarian revolution on the basis of a "materialized"

dialectic is only a transitional phase of the workers' movement. Marxism is not the theory of an independent proletarian revolution but the theory of a proletarian revolution as it develops out of the bourgeois revolution, and this theory shows its origins: it is still tainted with bourgeois revolutionary theory, that is to say with Jacobinism. This means that Marxist politics remain within the orbit of bourgeois politics. As Korsch said explicitly in his 1950 Ten Theses on Marxism Today, Marxism adheres unconditionally to the political forms of the bourgeois revolution. The break with bourgeois politics has been carried through only by the anarchist and syndicalist movements, in the form of the break with politics as such.

Only these movements were still revolutionary in practice. For Korsch their importance was that they still maintained the ideal, everywhere else sacrificed, of class solidarity above immediate material interests and they based themselves on the self-activity of the working class as expressed in the principle of direct action.

When, the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, Korsch supported the CNT militants' attempts to introduce workers' management in opposition to the political line of the right-wing socialists, Stalinists and bourgeois republicans. This development to a syndicalist as opposed to orthodoxy Marxist socialist position went parallel to a re-interpretation of Marxism.

Although Korsch remained a Marxist his view of Marxism became increasingly critical. By 1960 he had completely rejected Marxism as the only theory of the proletarian revolution and had made Marx one, among others, of the numerous 11 precursors, founders and

developers of the workers' socialist movement. In 1961 he was working on a study of Bakunin and believed then that the basis of the revolutionary attitude in the modern bourgeois epoch would be an ethic Marx would have rejected as "anarchist." In his 1950 Ten Theses he also criticized Marxism's overestimation of the state as an instrument of social revolution and the two phase theory of socialism whereby the real emancipation of the working class is put into the indefinite future. Thus he explicitly rejected the elements of Marxism which separate it from anarchism.

Korsch's life's work is both an exposition and a critique of Marxism from a political position close to anarchism. Although, as Korsch himself showed, Marxism is not sufficient for a modern revolutionary movement, a study of Korsch's own Marxism allows one to preserve the best elements of the heritage of the classical workers' movement.

Footnotes:

(1) While this was certainly true at the time this article was written, in the interim several collections of Korsch's works in English appeared. See especially the special issue of TELOS devoted to Korsch and Douglas Kellner's Korsch anthology, which is still in print as of 1997 - CAN note)

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The pursuit of revolutionary struggle by what Marxism and Philosophy called an "ideological dictatorship" is in three ways different from the system of intellectual oppression established in Russia today in the name of the "dictatorship of the proletariat." First of all, it is a dictatorship of the proletariat and not over the proletariat. Secondly, it is a dictatorship of a class and not of a party or party leadership. Thirdly and most importantly, as a revolutionary dictatorship it is one element only of that radical process of social overthrow which by suppressing classes and class contradictions creates the preconditions for a 'withering away of the State,' and thereby the end of all ideological constraint. The essential purpose of an 'ideological dictatorship' in this sense is to abolish its own material and ideological causes and thereby to make its own existence unnecessary and impossible. From the very first day, this genuine proletarian dictatorship will be distinguished from any false imitation of it by its creation of the conditions of intellectual freedom not only for 'all' workers but for 'each individual' worker. Despite the alleged 'democracy' and 'freedom of thought' in bourgeois society, this freedom has never been enjoyed anywhere by the wage slaves who suffer its physical and

spiritual oppression. This is what concretely defines the Marxist concept of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. With it disappears the otherwise apparent contradiction between a call for 'ideological dictatorship,' and the essentially critical and revolutionary nature of the method and outlook of Communism. Socialism, both in its ends and its means, is a struggle to realize freedom.

-----Karl Korsch Marxism and Philosophy, Pages 125 and 126



## MARXISM AND PHILOSOPHY

KARL KORSCH (1923)

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**Source:** *Marxism and Philosophy*, Monthly Review Press, 1970, reproduced in its entirety.

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Until very recently, neither bourgeois nor Marxist thinkers had much appreciation of the fact that the relation between Marxism and philosophy might pose a very important theoretical and practical problem. For professors of philosophy, Marxism was at best a rather minor sub-section within the history of nineteenth-century philosophy, dismissed as ['The Decay of Hegelianism'](#). But 'Marxists' as well tended not to lay great stress on the 'philosophical side' of their theory, although for quite different reasons. Marx and Engels, it is true, often indicated with great pride that historically the German workers' movement had inherited the legacy of [classical German philosophy](#) in 'scientific socialism'. But they did not mean by this that scientific socialism or communism were primarily 'philosophies'. They rather saw the task of their 'scientific socialism' as that of definitively overcoming and superseding the form and content, not only of all previous bourgeois idealist philosophy, but thereby of philosophy altogether. Later I shall have to explain in more detail what, according to the original conception of Marx and Engels, the nature of this supersession was or was intended to be. For the moment I merely record that historically this issue simply ceased to be a problem as far as most later Marxists were concerned. The manner in which they

dealt with the question of philosophy can best be described in the vivid terms in which Engels once described [Feuerbach's attitude to Hegelian philosophy](#): Feuerbach simply '[shoved' it 'unceremoniously aside'](#)'. In fact, very many later Marxists, apparently in highly orthodox compliance with the masters' instructions, dealt in exactly the same unceremonious way not only with Hegelian philosophy but with philosophy as a whole. Thus, for example, Franz Mehring more than once laconically described his own orthodox Marxist position on the question of philosophy by saying that he accepted the 'rejection of all philosophic fantasies' which was the precondition for the masters'(Marx and Engels) immortal accomplishments'. This statement came from a man who could with justice say that he had 'concerned himself with the philosophical origins of Marx and Engels more thoroughly than anyone else', and it is extremely significant for the generally dominant position on all philosophical problems found among the Marxist theoreticians of the Second International (1889-1914). The prominent Marxist theoreticians of the period regarded concern with questions that were not even essentially philosophical in the narrower sense, but were only related to the general epistemological and methodological bases of Marxist theory, as at most an utter waste of time and effort. Of course, whether they liked it or not, they allowed discussion of such philosophical issues within the Marxist camp and in some circumstances they took part themselves. But when doing so they made it quite clear that the elucidation of such problems was totally irrelevant to the practice of proletarian class struggle, and would always have to remain so. Such a conception was, however, only self-evident and logically justified given the premise that Marxism as a theory and practice was in essence totally

unalterable and involved no specific position on any philosophical questions whatever.

This meant that it was not regarded as impossible, for example, for a leading Marxist theoretician to be a follower of Arthur Schopenhauer in his private philosophical life.

During that period, therefore, however great the contradictions between Marxist and bourgeois theory were in all other respects, on this one point there was an apparent agreement between the two extremes. Bourgeois professors of philosophy reassured each other that Marxism had no philosophical content of its own - and thought they were saying something important *against* it. Orthodox Marxists also reassured each other that their Marxism by its very nature had nothing to do with philosophy - and thought they were saying something important *in favour* of it. There was yet a third trend that started from the same basic position; and throughout this period it was the only one to concern itself somewhat more thoroughly with the philosophical side of socialism. It consisted of those 'philosophising socialists' of various kinds who saw their task as that of 'supplementing' the Marxist system with ideas from *Kulturphilosophie* or with notions from Kant, Dietzgen or Mach, or other philosophies. Yet precisely because they thought that the Marxist system needed philosophical supplements, they made it quite clear that in their eyes too Marxism in itself lacked philosophical content.

Nowadays it is rather easy to show that this purely *negative* conception of the relation between Marxism and philosophy, which we have shown to be held in

apparent unanimity by bourgeois scholars as well as by orthodox Marxists, arose in both cases from a very superficial and incomplete analysis of historical and logical development. However, the conditions under which they both came to this conclusion *in part* diverge greatly, and so I want to describe them separately. It will then be clear that in spite of the great difference between the motives on either side, the two sets of causes do coincide in one crucial place. Among *bourgeois scholars* in the second half of the nineteenth century there was a total disregard of Hegel's philosophy, which coincided with a complete incomprehension of the relation of philosophy to reality, and of theory to practice, which constituted the living principle of all philosophy and science in Hegel's time. On the other hand *Marxists* simultaneously tended in exactly the same way increasingly to forget the original meaning of the dialectical principle. Yet it was this that the two young Hegelians Marx and Engels, when they were turning away from Hegel in the 1840s, had quite deliberately rescued from German idealist philosophy and transferred to the materialist conception of history and society.

First I shall summarise the reasons why, since the middle of the nineteenth century, *bourgeois* philosophers and historians have progressively abandoned the dialectical conception of the history of philosophy; and why they have therefore been incapable of adequately analysing and presenting the independent essence of Marxist philosophy and its significance within the general development of nineteenth-century philosophy.

One could perhaps argue that there were much more immediate reasons for the disregard and misinterpretation of Marxist philosophy, and that there is

therefore absolutely no need for us to explain its suppression by reference to the abandonment of the dialectic. It is true that in nineteenth-century writing on the history of philosophy, a conscious class instinct undeniably contributed to the perfunctory treatment of Marxism, and, what is more, to a similar treatment of such bourgeois 'atheists' and 'materialists' as David Friedrich Strauss, Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Feuerbach. But we would only have a very crude idea of what in reality constitutes a very complex situation if we simply accused bourgeois philosophers of having consciously subordinated their philosophy, or history of philosophy, to class interest. There are of course instances which do correspond to this crude thesis. But in general the relation of the philosophical representatives of a class to the class which they represent is a good deal more complex. In his *Eighteenth Brumaire* Marx deals specifically with interconnections of this kind. He says there that the class as a whole creates and forms 'an entire superstructure of distinct and peculiarly formed sentiments, illusions, modes of thought and views of life' out of its 'material foundations'. A part of the superstructure that is 'determined by class' in this way, yet is particularly remote from its 'material and economic foundation', is the philosophy of the class in question. This is most obvious as regards its content; but it also applies in the last instance to its formal aspects. If we want to understand the complete incomprehension of the philosophical content of Marxism on the part of bourgeois historians of philosophy, and really to understand it in Marx's sense of the word - that is 'materialistically and therefore scientifically' we must not be content to explain this phenomenon directly and immediately by its 'earthly kernel' (namely class consciousness and the economic interests which it

conceals 'in the last instance'). Our task is to show in detail the *mediations* of the process whereby even those bourgeois philosophers and historians who sincerely try to investigate 'pure' truth with the greatest 'objectivity' are bound completely to overlook the philosophical content of Marxism or are only able to interpret it in an inadequate and superficial way. For our purposes the most important of these mediations is undoubtedly the fact that since the middle of the nineteenth century the whole of bourgeois philosophy, and especially, the bourgeois writing of the history of philosophy, has for socioeconomic reasons abandoned Hegelian philosophy and the dialectical method. It has returned to a method of philosophy, and of writing the history of philosophy, which renders it almost impossible for it to make anything 'philosophical' out of a phenomenon like Marx's scientific socialism.

In the normal presentations of the history of the nineteenth-century philosophy which emanate from bourgeois authors, there is a gap at a specific point which can only be overcome in a highly artificial manner, if at all. These historians want to present the development of philosophical thought in a totally ideological and hopelessly undialectical way, as a pure process of the 'history of ideas'. It is therefore impossible to see how they can find a rational explanation for the fact that by the 1850s Hegel's grandiose philosophy had virtually no followers left in Germany and was totally misunderstood soon afterwards, whereas as late as the 1830s even its greatest enemies (Schopenhauer or Herbart) were unable to escape its overpowering intellectual influence. Most of them did not even try to provide such an explanation, but were instead content to note in their annals the disputes following Hegel's death under the utterly

negative rubric of 'The Decay of Hegelianism'. Yet the content of these disputes was very significant and they were also, by today's standards, of an extremely high formal philosophical level. They took place between the various tendencies of Hegel's school, the Right, the Centre and the different tendencies of the Left, especially Strauss, Bauer, Feuerbach, Marx and Engels. To close this period, these historians of philosophy simply set a kind of absolute 'end' to the Hegelian philosophic movement. They then begin the 1860s with the return to Kant (Helmholtz, Zeller, Liebmann, Lange) which appears as a new epoch of philosophical development, without any direct connection to anything else. This kind of history of philosophy has three great limitations, two of which can be revealed by a critical revision that itself remains more or less completely within the realm of the history of ideas. Indeed, in recent years more thorough philosophers, especially [Dilthey](#) and his school, have considerably expanded the limited perspective of normal histories of philosophy in these two respects. These two limits can therefore be regarded as having been overcome in principle, although in practice they have survived to this day and will presumably continue to do so for a very long time. The third limit, however, cannot in any way be surpassed from within the realm of the history of ideas; consequently it has not yet been overcome even in principle by contemporary bourgeois historians of philosophy.

The first of these three limits in the bourgeois history of philosophy during the second half of the nineteenth century can be characterised as a 'purely philosophical' one. The ideologues of the time did not see that the ideas contained in a philosophy can live on not only in philosophies, but equally well in positive sciences and

social practice, and that this process precisely began on a large scale with Hegel's philosophy. The second limit is a 'local' one, and was most typical of German professors of philosophy in the second half of the last century: these worthy Germans ignored the fact that there were other philosophers beyond the boundaries of Germany. Hence, with a few exceptions, they quite failed to see that the Hegelian system, although pronounced dead in Germany for decades, had continued to flourish in several foreign countries, not only in its content but also as a system and a method. In the development of the history of philosophy over recent decades, these first two limits to its perspective have in principle been overcome, and the picture painted above of the standard histories of philosophy since 1850 has of late undergone considerable improvement. However, bourgeois philosophers and historians are quite unable to overcome a third limitation on their historical outlook, because this would entail these 'bourgeois' philosophers and historians of philosophy abandoning the *bourgeois class standpoint* which constitutes the most essential *a priori* of their entire historical and philosophical science. For what appears as the purely 'ideal' development of philosophy in the nineteenth century can in fact only be fully and essentially grasped by relating it to the concrete historical development of bourgeois society as a whole. It is precisely this relation that bourgeois historians of philosophy, at their present stage of development, are incapable of studying scrupulously and impartially.

This explains why right up to the present day certain phases of the general development of philosophy in the nineteenth-century have had to remain 'transcendent' for these bourgeois historians of philosophy. It also explains why there are still certain curious 'blank patches' on the



maps of contemporary bourgeois histories of philosophy (already described in connection with the 'end' of the Hegelian movement in the 1840s and the empty space after it, before the 'reawakening' of philosophy in the 1860s). It also becomes intelligible why bourgeois histories of philosophy today no longer have any coherent grasp even of a period of German philosophy whose concrete essence they previously had succeeded in understanding. In other words, neither the development of philosophical thought *after* Hegel, nor the preceding evolution of philosophy from Kant to Hegel, can be understood as a mere chain of ideas. Any attempt to understand the full nature and meaning of this whole later period - normally referred to in history books as the epoch of 'German idealism' - will fail hopelessly so long as certain connections that are vital for its whole form and course are not registered, or are registered only superficially or belatedly. These are the connections between the 'intellectual movement' of the period and the 'revolutionary movement' that was contemporary with it.

In Hegel's *History of Philosophy* and other works there are passages describing the nature of the philosophy of his immediate predecessors - Kant, Fichte, and Schelling - which are valid for the whole period of so-called 'German idealism' including its crowning 'conclusion', the Hegelian system itself. They are also applicable to the later conflicts in the 1840s between the various Hegelian tendencies. Hegel wrote that in the philosophic systems of this fundamentally revolutionary epoch, 'revolution was lodged and expressed as if in the very form of their thought'. Hegel's accompanying statements make it quite clear that he was not talking of what contemporary bourgeois historians of philosophy like to call a revolution in thought - a nice, quiet process that

takes place in the pure realm of the study and far away from the crude realm of real struggles. The greatest thinker produced by bourgeois society in its revolutionary period regarded a 'revolution in the form of thought' as an objective component of the total social process of a real revolution. Only two peoples, the German and the French - despite or precisely because of their contrasts - took part in this great epoch of world history, whose deepest essence is grasped by the philosophy of history. Other nations took no inward part in it: their governments and peoples merely played a political role. This principle swept Germany as thought, spirit and concept; in France it was unleashed in effective reality. What reality there was in Germany, however, appeared as a violent result of external conditions and as a reaction to them. A few pages further on, when presenting the philosophy of Kant, Hegel returns to the same theme:

'Rousseau already placed the Absolute in Freedom; Kant possesses the same principle, only in a more theoretical version. The French regard it from the point of view of will, for they have a proverb *'Il a la tête pres du bonnet'* (He is hot-headed). France has a sense of reality, of accomplishment, because ideas there are translated more directly into action; consequently men there have applied themselves practically to reality. However much freedom in itself is concrete, in France it was applied to reality in an undeveloped and abstract form; and to establish abstraction in reality is to destroy that reality. The fanaticism of freedom, when the people took possession of it, became terrible. In Germany the same principle aroused the interest of consciousness but was only developed in a theoretical manner. We have all kinds of commotions within us and about us; but through them all

the German head prefers to let its sleeping cap sit quietly where it is and silently carries on its operations beneath it - Immanuel Kant was born in Königsberg in 1724", and so on.

These passages from Hegel affirm a principle which renders intelligible the innermost nature of this great period of world history: the dialectical relation between philosophy and reality. Elsewhere Hegel formulated this principle in a more general way, when he wrote that every philosophy can be nothing but '*its own epoch comprehended in thought.*' Essential in any event for a real understanding of the development of philosophical thought, this axiom becomes even more relevant for a revolutionary period of social evolution. Indeed, it is exactly this that explains the fate which irresistibly overtook the further development of philosophy and the historical study of philosophy by the *bourgeois class* in the nineteenth century. In the middle of the nineteenth century this class ceased to be revolutionary in its social *practice*, and by an inner necessity it thereby also lost the ability to comprehend in *thought* the true dialectical interrelation of ideas and real historical developments, above all of philosophy and revolution. In social practice, the revolutionary development of the bourgeoisie declined and halted in the middle of the nineteenth century. This process found its ideological expression in the apparent decline and end of philosophical development, on which bourgeois historians dwell to this day. A typical example of this kind of thinking is the comment of Überweg and Heinze, who begin the relevant section of their book by saying that philosophy found itself at this time 'in a state of general exhaustion', and 'increasingly lost its influence on cultural activity'. According to Überweg, this sad

occurrence was due primarily to 'tendencies of psychological revulsion', whereas all 'external moments' had only a 'secondary effect'. This famous bourgeois historian of philosophy explains the character of these 'tendencies of psychological revulsion' to himself and his readers as follows: 'People became tired of both inflated idealism and of metaphysical speculation (!) and wanted spiritual nourishment that had more substance to it.' The philosophic developments of the nineteenth century appear at once in a totally different form (even from the standpoint of the history of ideas a more adequate one) if they are tackled resolutely and thoroughly with a dialectical method, even in the undeveloped and only partly conscious form in which Hegel used it - in other words in the form of Hegel's idealist dialectic as opposed to Marx's materialist dialectic.

Viewed in this perspective, the revolutionary movement in the realm of ideas, rather than abating and finally ceasing in the 1840s, merely underwent a deep and significant change of character. Instead of making an *exit*, classical German philosophy, the ideological expression of the revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie, made a *transition* to a new science which henceforward appeared in the history of ideas as the general expression of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat: the theory of 'scientific socialism' first founded and formulated by Marx and Engels in the 1840s. Bourgeois historians of philosophy have hitherto either entirely ignored this essential and necessary relation between German idealism and Marxism, or they have only conceived and presented it inadequately and incoherently. To grasp it properly, it is necessary to abandon the normal abstract and ideological approach of modern historians of philosophy for an approach that

need not be specifically Marxist but is just straightforwardly dialectical, in the Hegelian and Marxist sense. If we do this, we can see at once not only the interrelations between German idealist philosophy and Marxism, but also their internal necessity. Since the Marxist system is the theoretical expression of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat, and German idealist philosophy is the theoretical expression of the revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie, they must stand intelligently and historically (i.e. ideologically) in the same relation to each other as the revolutionary movement of the proletariat as a class stands to the revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie, in the realm of social and political practice. There is one unified historical process of historical development in which an 'autonomous' proletarian class movement emerges from the revolutionary movement of the third estate, and the new materialist theory of Marxism 'autonomously' confronts bourgeois idealist philosophy. All these processes affect each other reciprocally. The emergence of Marxist theory is, in Hegelian-Marxist terms, only the 'other side' of the emergence of the real proletarian movement; it is both sides together that comprise the concrete totality of the historical process.

This dialectical approach enables us to grasp the four different trends we have mentioned - the revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie, idealist philosophy from Kant to Hegel, the revolutionary class movement of the proletariat, and the materialist philosophy of Marxism - as four moments of a single historical process. This allows us to understand the real nature of the new science, theoretically formulated by Marx and Engels, which forms the general expression of the independent revolutionary movement of the proletariat. This

materialist philosophy emerged from the most advanced systems of revolutionary bourgeois idealism; and it is now intelligible why bourgeois histories of philosophy had either to ignore it completely or could only understand its nature in a negative and - literally - inverted sense. The essential practical aims of the proletarian movement cannot be realised within bourgeois society and the bourgeois State. Similarly, the philosophy of this bourgeois society is unable to understand the nature of the general propositions in which the revolutionary movement of the proletariat has found its independent and self-conscious expression. The bourgeois standpoint has to stop in theory where it has to stop in social practice - as long as it does not want to cease being a 'bourgeois' standpoint altogether, in other words supersede itself. Only when the history of philosophy surmounts this barrier does scientific socialism cease to be a transcendental Beyond and become a possible object of comprehension. The peculiarity, however, that greatly complicates any correct understanding of the problem of 'Marxism and philosophy' is this: it appears as if in the very act of surpassing the limits of a bourgeois position - an act indispensable to grasp the essentially new philosophical content of Marxism - *Marxism itself at once superseded and annihilated as a philosophical object.*

At the outset of this investigation we stated that Marx and Engels, the founders of scientific socialism, were far from wanting to construct a new philosophy. In contrast to bourgeois thinkers, on the other hand, they were both fully aware of the close historical connection between their materialist theory and bourgeois idealist philosophy. According to Engels, socialism in its *content* is the product of *new* conceptions that necessarily arise at

a definite stage of social development within the proletariat as a result of its material situation. But it created its own specific scientific *form* (which distinguishes it from utopian socialism) by its link with German idealism, especially the philosophical system of Hegel. [Socialism, which developed from utopia to science](#), formally *emerged* from German idealist philosophy. Naturally, this (formal) philosophical *origin* did not mean that socialism therefore had to remain a philosophy in its *independent form and further development*. From 1845 onwards, at the latest, Marx and Engels characterised their new materialist and scientific standpoint as no longer philosophical. It should be remembered here that all philosophy was for them equivalent to bourgeois philosophy. But it is precisely the significance of this equation of all philosophy with bourgeois philosophy that needs to be stressed. For it involves much the same relationship as that of Marxism and the State. Marx and Engels not only combated one specific historical form of the State, but historically and materialistically they equated the State as such with the bourgeois State and they therefore declared the abolition of the State to be the political aim of communism. Similarly, they were not just combating specific philosophical systems - they wanted eventually to overcome and supersede philosophy altogether, by scientific socialism. It is here that find the major contradiction between the 'realistic' (i.e. dialectically materialist) conception of Marxism and the 'ideological humbug of jurists and others' (Marx) characteristic of Lassalleanism and all earlier and later versions of 'vulgar socialism'. The latter basically never surpassed the 'bourgeois level', i.e. the standpoint of bourgeois society.

Any thorough elucidation of the relationship between 'Marxism and philosophy' must start from the unambiguous statements of Marx and Engels themselves that a necessary result of their new dialectical-materialist standpoint was the supersession, not only of bourgeois idealist philosophy, but *simultaneously* of all philosophy *as such*. It is essential not to obscure the fundamental significance of this Marxist attitude towards philosophy by regarding the whole dispute as a purely verbal one - implying that Engels simply bestowed a new name on certain epistemological principles known in Hegelian terminology as 'the philosophical aspect of sciences', which were, substantially preserved in the materialist transformation of the Hegelian dialectic. There are, of course, some formulations in Marx and especially the later Engels which appear to suggest this. But it is easy to see that philosophy itself is not abolished by a mere abolition of its name. Such purely terminological points must be dismissed in any serious examination of the relationship between Marxism and philosophy. The problem is rather how we should understand the abolition of philosophy of which Marx and Engels spoke - mainly in the 1840s, but on many later occasions *as well*. How should this process be accomplished, or has it already been accomplished? By what actions? At what speed? And for whom? Should this abolition of philosophy be regarded as accomplished so to speak once and for all by a single intellectual deed of Marx and Engels? Should it be regarded as accomplished only for Marxists, or for the whole proletariat, or for the whole of humanity? Or should we see it (like the abolition of the State) as a very long and arduous revolutionary process which unfolds through the most diverse phases? If so, what is the relationship of Marxism to philosophy so



long as this arduous process has not yet attained its final goal, the abolition of philosophy?

If the question of the relationship of Marxism to philosophy is posed like this, it becomes clear that we are not dealing with senseless and pointless reflections on issues that have long been resolved. On the contrary, the problem remains of the greatest theoretical and practical importance. Indeed, it is especially crucial in the present stage of the proletarian class struggle. Orthodox Marxists behaved for many decades as if no problem was involved at all, or at most only one which would always remain immaterial to the practice of the class struggle. It is now this position itself which appears highly dubious - all the more so in the light of the peculiar parallelism between the two problems of Marxism and Philosophy and Marxism and State. It is well known that the latter, as Lenin says in *State and Revolution* 'hardly concerned the major theoreticians and publicists of the Second International'. This raises the question: if there is a definite connection between the abolition of the State and the abolition of the philosophy, is there also a connection between the neglect of these two problems by the Marxists of the Second International? The problem can be posed more exactly. Lenin's bitter criticism of the debasement of Marxism by opportunism connects the neglect of the problem of the State by the Marxists of the Second International to a more general context. Is this context also operative in the case of Marxism and philosophy? In other words, is the neglect of the problem of philosophy by the Marxists of the Second International also related to the fact that '*problems of revolution in general hardly concerned them*'?

To clarify the matter, we must make a more detailed analysis of the nature and causes of the greatest crisis that has yet occurred in the history of Marxist theory and which in the last decade has split Marxists into three hostile camps.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the long period of purely evolutionary development of capitalism came to an end, and a new epoch of revolutionary struggle began. Because of this change in the practical conditions of class struggle, there were increasing signs that Marxist theory had entered a critical phase. It became obvious that the extraordinarily banal and rudimentary vulgar-Marxism of the epigones had an extremely inadequate awareness of even the totality of its own problems, let alone any definite positions on a whole range of questions outside them. The crisis of Marxist theory showed itself most clearly in the problem of the attitude of social revolution towards the State. This major issue had never been seriously posed in practice since the defeat of the first proletarian revolutionary movement in 1848, and the repression of the revolt of the Commune of 1871. It was put concretely on the agenda once again by the World War, the first and second Russian Revolutions of 1917, and the collapse of the Central Powers in 1918. It now became clear that there was no unanimity whatever within the camp of Marxism on such major issues of transition and goal as the seizure of State power by the proletariat, the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', and the final 'withering away of the State' in communist society. On the contrary, no sooner were all these questions posed in a concrete and unavoidable manner, than there emerged at least three different theoretical positions on them, all of which claimed to be Marxist. Yet in the pre-war period, the

most prominent representatives of these three tendencies - respectively Renner, Kautsky and Lenin - had not only been regarded as Marxists but as orthodox Marxists. For some decades there had been an apparent crisis in the camp of the Social Democrat parties and trade unions of the Second International; this took the shape of a conflict between orthodox Marxism and revisionism. But with the emergence of different socialist tendencies over these new questions, it became clear that this apparent crisis was only a provisional and illusory version of a much deeper rift that ran through the orthodox Marxist front itself. On one side of this rift, there appeared Marxist neo-reformism which soon more or less amalgamated with the earlier revisionism. On the other side, the theoretical representatives of a new revolutionary proletarian party unleashed a struggle against both the old reformism of the revisionists and the new reformism of the 'Centre', under the battle-cry of restoring pure or revolutionary Marxism.

This crisis erupted within the Marxist camp at the outbreak of the World War. But it would be an extremely superficial and undialectical conception of the historical process thoroughly non-Marxist and non-materialist, indeed not even Hegelian-idealist - to attribute it merely to the cowardice, or deficient revolutionary convictions, of the theoreticians and publicists who were responsible for this impoverishment and reduction of Marxist theory to the orthodox vulgar-Marxism of the Second International. Yet it would be equally superficial and undialectical to imagine that the great polemics between Lenin, Kautsky and other 'Marxists' were merely intended to restore Marxism, by faithfully re-establishing the Marxist doctrine. Hitherto we have only used the dialectical method, which Hegel and Marx introduced

into the study of history, to analyse the philosophy of German idealism and the Marxist theory that *emerged* from it. But the only really materialist and therefore scientific method (Marx) of pursuing this analysis is to apply it to *the further development of* Marxism up to the present. This means that we must try to understand every change, development and revision of Marxist theory, since its original emergence - from the philosophy of German Idealism, as a necessary product of its epoch (Hegel). More precisely, we should seek to understand their determination by the totality of the historico-social process of which they are a general expression (Marx). We will then be able to grasp the real origins of the degeneration of Marxist theory into vulgar-Marxism. We may also discern the meaning of the passionate yet apparently 'ideological' efforts of the Marxist theorists of the Third International today to restore 'Marx's genuine doctrine'.

If we thus apply Marx's principle of dialectical materialism to the whole history of Marxism, we can distinguish three major stages of development through which Marxist theory has passed *since* its birth - inevitably so in the context of the concrete social development of this epoch. The first phase begins around 1843, and corresponds in the history of ideas to the [Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right](#). It ends with the Revolution of 1848 - corresponding to the *Communist Manifesto*. The second phase begins with the bloody suppression of the Parisian proletariat in the battle of June 1848 and the resultant crushing of all the working class's organisations and dreams of emancipation 'in a period of feverish industrial activity, moral degeneration and political reaction', as Marx masterfully describes it in his *Inaugural Address* of 1864. We are not concerned

here with the social history of the working-class as a whole, but only with the internal development of Marxist theory in its relation to the general class history of the proletariat. Hence the second period may be said to last approximately to the end of the century, leaving out all the less important divisions (the foundation and collapse of the First International; the interlude of the Commune; the struggle between Marxists and Lassalleans; the Anti-socialist laws in Germany; trade unions; the founding of the Second International. The third phase extends from the start of this century to the present and into an indefinite future.

Arranged in this way, the historical development of Marxist theory presents the following picture. The first manifestation of it naturally remained essentially unchanged in the minds of Marx and Engels themselves throughout the later period, although in their *writings* it did not stay entirely unaltered. In spite of all their denials of philosophy, this first version of the theory is permeated through and through with philosophical thought. It is a theory of *social development* seen and comprehended as a living totality; or, more precisely, it is a theory of *social revolution* comprehended and practised as a living totality. At this stage there is no question whatever of dividing the economic, political and intellectual moments of this totality into separate branches of knowledge, even while every concrete peculiarity of each separate moment is comprehended analysed and criticised with historical fidelity. Of course, it is not only economics, politics and ideology, but also the historical process and conscious social action that continue to make up the living unity of 'revolutionary practice' ([\*Theses on Feuerbach\*](#)). The best example of this early and youthful form of Marxist theory as the

theory of social revolution is obviously the *Communist Manifesto*.

It is wholly understandable from the viewpoint of the materialist dialectic that this original form of Marxist theory could not subsist unaltered throughout the long years of the second half of the nineteenth century (which was in practice quite unrevolutionary). Marx's remark in the [\*Preface to the Critique of political Economy\*](#) on mankind as a whole is necessarily also true for the working class, which was then slowly and antagonistically maturing towards its own liberation: 'It always sets itself only such problems as it can solve; since, looking at the matter more closely it will always be found that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or are at least understood to be in the process of emergence'. This dictum is not affected by the fact that a problem which supersedes present relations may have been formulated in an anterior epoch. To accord theory an autonomous existence outside the objective movement of history would obviously be neither materialist nor dialectical in the Hegelian sense; it would simply be an idealist metaphysics. A dialectical conception comprehends every form without exception in terms of the flow of this movement, and it necessarily follows from it that Marx's and Engels's theory of social revolution inevitably underwent considerable changes in the course of its further development. When Marx in 1864 drafted the *Inaugural Address* and the *Statutes of the First International* he was perfectly conscious of the fact that time was needed for the reawakened movement to permit the old audacity of language. This is of course true not only for language but for all the other components of the theory of the movement. Therefore

the scientific socialism of the *Capital* of 1867 - 94 and the other later writings of Marx and Engels represent an expression of the general theory of Marxism, which is in many ways a different and more developed one than that of the direct revolutionary communism of the *Manifesto* of 1847 - 8 - or for that matter, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, *The Class Struggles in France* and *The Eighteenth Brumaire*. Nevertheless, the central characteristic of Marxist theory remains essentially unaltered even in the later writings of Marx and Engels. For in its later version, as scientific socialism, the Marxism of Marx and Engels remains the inclusive whole of a theory of social revolution. The difference is only that in the later phase the various components of this whole, its economic, political and ideological elements, scientific theory and social practice, are further separated out. We can use an expression of Marx's and say that the umbilical cord of its natural combination has been broken. In Marx and Engels, however, this never produces a multiplicity of independent elements instead of the whole. It is merely that another combination of the components of the system emerges developed with greater scientific precision and built on the infrastructure of the critique of political economy. In the writings of its creators, the Marxist system itself never dissolves into a sum of separate branches of knowledge, in spite of a practical and outward employment of its results that suggests such a conclusion. For example, many bourgeois interpreters of Marx and some later Marxists thought they were able to distinguish between the historical and the theoretico-economic material in Marx's major work *Capital*; but all they proved by this is that they understood nothing of the real method of Marx's critique of political economy. For it is one of the essential signs of his dialectical materialist method that

this distinction does not exist for it; it is indeed precisely a theoretical comprehension of history. Moreover, the unbreakable interconnection of theory and practice, which formed the most characteristic sign of the first communist version of Marx's materialism, was in no way abolished in the later form of his system. It is only to the superficial glance that a pure theory of thought seems to have displaced the practice of the revolutionary will. This revolutionary will is latent, yet present, in every sentence of Marx's work and erupts again and again in every decisive passage, especially in the first volume of *Capital*. One need only think of the famous seventh section of Chapter 24 on the historical tendency of capital accumulation.

On the other hand, it has to be said that the supporters and followers of Marx, despite all their theoretical and methodological avowals of historical materialism, in fact divided the theory of social revolution into fragments. The correct materialist conception of history, understood theoretically in a dialectical way and practically in a revolutionary way, is incompatible with separate branches of knowledge that are isolated and autonomous, and with purely theoretical investigations that are scientifically objective in dissociation from revolutionary practice. Yet later Marxists came to regard scientific socialism more and more as a set of purely scientific observations, without any *immediate* connection to the political or other practices of class struggle. Sufficient proof of this is one writer's account of the relation between Marxist science and politics, who was in the best sense a representative Marxist theoretician of the Second International. In December 1909, Rudolph Hilferding published his *Finance Capital* which attempts to 'understand scientifically' the economic aspects of the



most recent development of capitalism 'by inserting these phenomena into the theoretical system of classical political economy'. In the introduction he wrote:

'Here it need only be said that for Marxism the study of politics itself aims only at the discovery of causal connections. Knowledge of the laws governing a society of commodity production reveals at once the determinants of the will of the classes of this society. For a Marxist, the task of scientific politics - a politics which describes causal connections - is to discover these determinants of the will of classes. Marxist politics, like Marxist theory, is free of value-judgements. It is therefore false simply to identify Marxism with socialism, although it is very common for Marxists and non-Marxists to do so. Logically Marxism, seen only as a scientific system and therefore apart from its historical effects, is only a theory of the laws of motion of society, which the Marxist conception of history formulated in general, while Marxist economics has applied it to the age of commodity production. The advent of socialism is a result of tendencies that develop in a society that produces commodities. But insight into the correctness of Marxism, which includes insight into the necessity of socialism, is in no way a result of value judgements and has no implications for practical behaviour. It is one thing to acknowledge a necessity and quite another to place oneself at the service of this necessity. It is more than possible that a man may be convinced of the final victory of socialism, and yet decides to fight against it. The insight into the laws of motion of society provided by Marxism ensures superiority to whoever has mastered them. The most dangerous opponents of socialism are undoubtedly those who have profited most from its experience.'

According to Hilferding, Marxism is a theory which is logically 'a scientific, objective and free science, without value judgements'. He has no difficulty in explaining the remarkable fact that people so often identify it with the struggle for socialism by invoking the 'insuperable reluctance of the ruling class to accept the results of Marxism' and therefore to take the 'trouble' to study such a 'complicated system'. 'Only in this sense is it the science of the proletariat and the opponent of bourgeois economics, since it otherwise holds unflinchingly to the claim made by every science of the objective and general validity of its conclusions'. Thus the materialist conception of history, which in Marx and Engels was essentially a dialectical one, eventually become something quite undialectical in their epigones. For one tendency, it has changed into a kind of heuristic principle of specialised theoretical investigation. For another, the fluid methodology of Marx's materialist dialectic freezes into a number of theoretical formulations about the causal interconnection of historical phenomena in different areas of society - in other words it became something that could best be described as a general systematic sociology. The former school treated Marx's materialist principle as merely a subjective basis for reflective judgement in Kant's sense, while the latter dogmatically regarded the teachings of Marxist 'sociology' primarily as an economic system, or even a geographical and biological one. All these deformations and a row of other less important ones were inflicted on Marxism by its epigones in the second phase of its development, and they can be summarised in one all-inclusive formulation: a unified general theory of social revolution was changed into criticisms of the bourgeois economic order, of the bourgeois State, of the bourgeois

system of education, of bourgeois religion, art, science and culture. These criticisms no longer necessarily develop by their very nature into revolutionary practices they can equally well develop, into all kinds of attempts at *reform*, which fundamentally remain within the limits of bourgeois society and the bourgeois State, and in actual practice usually did so. This distortion of the revolutionary doctrine of Marxism itself - into a purely theoretical critique that no longer leads to practical revolutionary action, or does so only haphazardly - is very clear if one compares the *Communist Manifesto* or even the 1864 *Statutes of the First International* drawn up by Marx, to the programmes of the Socialist Parties of Central and Western Europe in the second half of the nineteenth century, and especially to that of the German Social Democratic Party. It is well known how bitterly critical Marx and Engels were of the fact that German Social Democracy made almost entirely *reformist* demands in the political as well as cultural and ideological fields in their Gotha (1875) and Erfurt (1891) programmes. These documents contained not a whiff of the genuine materialist and revolutionary principle in Marxism. Indeed, towards the end of the century this situation led to the assaults of revisionism on orthodox Marxism. Eventually, at the start of the twentieth century, the first signs of the approaching storm heralded a new period of conflicts and revolutionary battles, and thereby led to the decisive crisis of Marxism in which we still find ourselves today.

Both processes may be seen as necessary phases of a total ideological and material development - once it is understood that the decline of the original Marxist theory of social revolution into a theoretical critique of society without any revolutionary consequences is for dialectical

materialism a necessary expression of parallel changes in the social practice of the proletarian struggle. Revisionism appears as an attempt to express in the form of a coherent theory the reformist character acquired by the economic struggles of the trade unions and the political struggles of the working class parties, under the influence of altered historical conditions. The so-called orthodox Marxism of this period (now a mere vulgar-Marxism) appears largely as an attempt by theoreticians, weighed down by tradition, to maintain the theory of social revolution which formed the first version of Marxism, in the shape of pure-theory. This theory was wholly abstract and had no practical consequences - it merely sought to reject the new reformist theories, in which the real character of the historical movement was then expressed as un-Marxist. This is precisely why, in a new revolutionary period, it was the orthodox Marxists of the Second International who were inevitably the least able to cope with such questions as the relation between the State and proletarian revolution. The revisionists at least possessed a theory of the relationship of the 'working people' to the State, although this theory was in no way a Marxist one. Their theory and practice had long since substituted political, social and cultural reforms within the bourgeois State for a social revolution that would seize, smash and replace it by the dictatorship of the proletariat. The orthodox Marxists were content to reject this solution to the problems of the transitional period as a violation of the principles of Marxism. Yet with all their orthodox obsession with the abstract letter of Marxist theory they were unable to preserve its original revolutionary character. Their scientific socialism itself had inevitably ceased to be a theory of social revolution. Over a long period, when Marxism was slowly spreading throughout Europe, it had in fact

no practical revolutionary task to accomplish. Therefore problems of revolution had ceased, even in theory, to exist as problems of the real world for the great majority of Marxists, orthodox as well as revisionist. As far as the reformists were concerned these problems had disappeared completely. But even for the orthodox Marxists they had wholly lost the immediacy with which the authors of the *Manifesto* had confronted them, and receded into a distant and eventually quite transcendental *future*. In this period people became used to pursuing here and now policies of which revisionism may be seen as the theoretical expression. Officially condemned by party congresses, this revisionism was in the end accepted no less officially by the trade unions. At the beginning of the century, a new period of development put the question of social revolution back on the agenda as a realistic and terrestrial question in all its vital dimensions. Therewith purely theoretical orthodox Marxism - till the outbreak of the World War the officially established version of Marxism in the Second International - collapsed completely and disintegrated. This was, of course, an inevitable result of its long internal decay. It is in this epoch that we can see in many countries the beginnings of *third period of development*, above all represented by Russian Marxists, and often described by its major representatives as a 'restoration' of Marxism.

This transformation and development of Marxist theory has been effected under the peculiar ideological guise of a return to the pure teaching of original or true Marxism. Yet it is easy to understand both the reasons for this guise and the real character of the process which is concealed by it. What theoreticians like Rosa Luxemburg in Germany and Lenin in Russia have done,

and are doing, in the field of Marxist theory is to liberate it from the inhibiting traditions of the Social Democracy of the second period. They thereby answer the practical needs of the new revolutionary stage of proletarian class struggle, for these traditions weighed 'like a nightmare' on the brain of the working masses whose objectively revolutionary socioeconomic position no longer corresponded to these evolutionary doctrines. The apparent revival of original Marxist theory in the Third International is simply a result of the fact that in a new revolutionary period not only the workers' movement itself, but the theoretical conceptions of communists which express it, must assume an explicitly revolutionary form. This is why large sections of the Marxist system, which seemed virtually forgotten in the final decades of the nineteenth century, have now come to life again. It also explains why the leader of the Russian Revolution could write a book a few months before October in which he stated that his aim was 'in the first place to *restore* the correct Marxist theory of the State'. Events themselves placed the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat on the agenda as a practical problem. When Lenin placed the same question theoretically on the agenda at a decisive moment, this was an early indication that the internal connection of theory and practice within revolutionary Marxism had been consciously re-established. A fresh examination of the problem of Marxism and philosophy would also seem to be an important part of this restoration. A negative judgement is clear from the start. The minimisation of philosophical problems by most Marxist theoreticians of the Second International was only a *partial expression* of the loss of the practical, revolutionary character of the Marxist movement which found its *general expression* in the simultaneous decay

of the living principles of dialectical materialism in the vulgar-Marxism of the epigones. We have already mentioned that Marx and Engels themselves always denied that scientific socialism was any longer a philosophy. But it is easy to show irrefutably, by reference to the sources, that what the revolutionary dialecticians Marx and Engels meant by the opposite of philosophy was something very different from what it meant to later vulgar-Marxism. Nothing was further from them than the claim to impartial, pure, theoretical study, above class differences, made by Hilferding and most of the other Marxists of the Second International. The scientific socialism of Marx and Engels, correctly understood, stands in far greater contrast to these pure sciences of bourgeois society (economics, history or sociology) than it does to the philosophy in which the revolutionary movement of the Third Estate once found its highest theoretical expression. Consequently, one can only wonder at the insight of more recent Marxists who have been misled by a few of Marx's well-known expressions and by a few of the later Engels, into interpreting the Marxist abolition of philosophy as the replacement of this philosophy by a system of abstract and undialectical positive sciences. The real contradiction between Marx's scientific socialism and all bourgeois philosophy *and sciences* consists entirely in the fact that scientific socialism is the theoretical expression of a revolutionary process, which will end with the total abolition of these bourgeois philosophies and sciences, together with the abolition of the material relations that find their ideological expression in them.

A re-examination of the problem of Marxism and philosophy is therefore very necessary, even on the theoretical level, in order to restore the correct and full

sense of Marx's theory, denatured and banalised by the epigones. However, just as in the case of Marxism and the State, this theoretical task really arises from the needs and pressures of revolutionary practice. In the period of revolutionary transition, after its seizure of power, the proletariat must accomplish definite revolutionary tasks in the ideological field, no less than in the political and economic fields - tasks which constantly interact with each other. The scientific theory of Marxism must become again what it was for the authors of the *Communist Manifesto* - not as a simple *return* but as a *dialectical development*: a theory of social revolution that comprises all areas of society as a totality. Therefore we must solve in a dialectically materialist fashion not only 'the question of the relationship of the State to social revolution and of social revolution to the State' (Lenin), but also the 'question of the relationship of ideology to social revolution and of social revolution to ideology'. To avoid these questions in the period before the proletarian revolution leads to opportunism and creates a crisis within Marxism, just as avoidance of the problem of State and revolution in the Second International led to opportunism and indeed provoked a crisis in the camp of Marxism. To evade a definite stand on these ideological problems of the transition can have disastrous political results in the period after the proletarian seizure of State power, because theoretical vagueness and disarray can seriously impede a prompt and energetic approach to problems that then arise in the ideological field. The major issue of the relation of the proletarian revolution to *ideology* was no less neglected by Social Democrat theoreticians than the political problem of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. Consequently in this new revolutionary period of struggle it must be posed anew and the correct



- dialectical and revolutionary - conception of original Marxism must be restored. This task can only be resolved by first investigating the problem which led Marx and Engels to the question of ideology: how is *philosophy* related to the social revolution of the proletariat and how is the social revolution of the proletariat related to philosophy? An answer to this question is indicated by Marx and Engels themselves and may be deduced from Marx's materialist dialectics. It will lead us on to a larger question: how is Marxist materialism related to *ideology* in general?

What is the relation of the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels to philosophy? 'None', replies vulgar-Marxism. In this perspective it is precisely the new materialist and scientific standpoint of Marxism which has refuted and superseded the old idealist philosophical standpoint. All philosophical ideas and speculations are thereby shown to be unreal - vacuous fantasies which still haunt a few minds as a kind of superstition, which the ruling class has a concrete material interest in preserving. Once capitalism is overthrown the remains of these fantasies will disappear at once.

One has only to reflect on this approach to philosophy in all its shallowness, as we have tried to do, to realise at once that such a solution to the problem of philosophy has nothing in common with the spirit of Marx's modern dialectical materialism. It belongs to the age in which that 'genius of bourgeois stupidity', Jeremy Bentham, explained 'Religion' in his Encyclopedia with the rubric 'crude superstitious opinions'. It is part of an atmosphere which was created in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and which inspired Eugen Dühring to write that in a future society, constructed according to his

plans, there would be no religious cults - for a correctly understood system of sociability would *suppress* all the apparatus needed for spiritual sorcery, and with it all the essential components of these cults. The outlook with which modern or dialectical materialism - the new and only scientific view of the world according to Marx and Engels - confronts these questions is in complete contrast to this shallow, rationalist and negative approach to ideological phenomena such as religion and philosophy. To present this contrast in all its bluntness one can say: it is essential for modern dialectical materialism to grasp philosophies and other ideological systems in theory as realities, and to treat them in practice as such. In their early period Marx and Engels began their whole revolutionary activity by struggling against the reality of philosophy; and it will be shown that, although later they did radically alter their view of how philosophical ideology was related to other forms within ideology as a whole, they always treated ideologies - including philosophy - as concrete realities and not as empty fantasies.

In the 1840s Marx and Engels began the revolutionary struggle - initially on a theoretical and philosophical plane for the emancipation of the class which stands 'not in partial opposition to the consequences, but in total opposition to the premises' of existing society as a whole. They were convinced that they were thereby attacking an extremely important part of the existing social order. In the editorial of the *Rheinische Zeitung* in 1842, Marx had already stated that 'philosophy does not stand outside the world, just as the brain does not stand outside man merely because it is not in his stomach'. He repeats this later in the Introduction to the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*: 'Previous philosophy itself

belongs to this world and is its, albeit idealist, elaboration. This is the work of which fifteen years later, in the Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*, Marx said that in it he definitively accomplished the transition to his later materialist position. Precisely when Marx, the dialectician, effected this transition from the idealist to the materialist conception, he made it quite explicit that the practically oriented political party in Germany at the time, which *rejected* all philosophy, was making as big a mistake as the theoretically oriented political party, which *failed to condemn* philosophy as such. The latter believed that it could combat the reality of the German world from a purely philosophical standpoint, that is, with propositions that were derived in one way or another from philosophy (much as Lassalle was later to do by invoking Fichte). It forgot that the philosophical standpoint itself was part of this dominant German world. But the practically oriented political party was basically trapped by the same limitation because it believed that the negation of philosophy 'can be accomplished by turning one's back on philosophy, looking in the opposite direction and mumbling some irritable and banal remarks about it'. It too did not regard 'philosophy as part of German reality'. The theoretically oriented party erroneously believed that 'it could realise philosophy in practice without superseding it in theory'. The practically oriented party made a comparable mistake by trying to supersede philosophy in practice without realising it in theory - in other words, without grasping it as a reality.

It is clear in what sense Marx (and Engels who underwent an identical development at the same time - as he and Marx often later explained) had now really surpassed the merely philosophical standpoint of his

student days; but one can also see how this process itself still had a philosophical character. There are three reasons why we can speak of a surpassal of the philosophical standpoint. First, Marx's theoretical standpoint here is not just partially opposed to the consequences of all existing German philosophy, but is in total opposition to its premises; (for both Marx and Engels this philosophy was always more than sufficiently represented by Hegel). Second, Marx is opposed not just to philosophy, which is only the head or ideal elaboration of the existing world, but to this world as a totality. Third, and most importantly, this opposition is not just theoretical but is also practical and active. 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world, our task is to change it', announces the last of the *Theses on Feuerbach*. Nevertheless, this general surpassal of the purely philosophical standpoint still incorporates a philosophical character. This becomes clear, once one realises how little this new proletarian science differs from previous philosophy in its theoretical character, even though Marx substitutes it for bourgeois idealist philosophy as a system radically distinct in its orientation and aims. German idealism had constantly tended, *even on the theoretical level*, to be more than just a theory or philosophy. This is comprehensible in the light of its relation to the revolutionary movement of the bourgeoisie (discussed above), and will be studied further in a later work. This tendency was typical of Hegel's predecessors - Kant, Schelling and especially Fichte. Although Hegel himself to all appearances reversed it, he too in fact allotted philosophy a task that went beyond the realm of theory and became in a certain sense practical. This task was not of course to change the world, as it was for Marx, but rather to reconcile Reason as a self-conscious Spirit with Reason as an actual

Reality, by means of concepts and comprehension. German idealism from Kant to Hegel did not cease to be philosophical when it affirmed this universal role (which is anyway what is colloquially thought to be the essence of any philosophy). Similarly it is incorrect to say that Marx's materialist theory is no longer philosophical merely because it has an aim that is not simply theoretical but is also a practical and revolutionary goal. On the contrary, the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels is by its very nature a philosophy through and through, as formulated in the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach and in other published and unpublished writings of the period. It is a revolutionary philosophy whose task is to participate in the revolutionary struggles waged in all spheres of society against the whole of the existing order, by fighting in one specific area - philosophy. Eventually, it aims at the concrete abolition of philosophy as part of the abolition of bourgeois social reality as a whole, of which it is an ideal component. In Marx's words: 'Philosophy cannot be abolished without being realised.' Thus just when Marx and Engels were progressing from Hegel's dialectical idealism to dialectical materialism, it is clear that the abolition of philosophy did not mean for them its simple rejection. Even when their later positions are under consideration, it is essential to take it as a constant starting point that Marx and Engels were dialecticians before they were materialists. The sense of their materialism is distorted in a disastrous and irreparable manner if one forgets that Marxist materialism was dialectical from the very beginning. It always remained a historical and dialectical materialism, in contrast to Feuerbach's abstract-scientific materialism and all other abstract materialisms, whether earlier or later, bourgeois or vulgar-Marxist. In other words, it was a materialism whose theory comprehended

the totality of society and history, and whose practice overthrew it. It was therefore possible for philosophy to become a less central component of the socio-historical process for Marx and Engels, in the course of their development of materialism, than it had seemed at the start. This did in fact occur. But no really dialectical materialist conception of history (certainly not that of Marx and Engels) could cease to regard philosophical ideology, or ideology in general, as a material component of general socio-historical reality - that is, a real part which had to be grasped in materialist theory and overthrown by materialist practice.

In his *Theses on Feuerbach* Marx contrasts his new materialism not only to philosophical idealism, but just as forcefully to every existing materialism. Similarly, *in all their later writings*, Marx and Engels emphasised the contrast between their dialectical materialism and the normal, abstract and undialectical version of materialism. They were especially conscious that this contrast was of great importance for any theoretical interpretation of so-called mental or ideological realities, and their treatment in practice. Discussing mental representations in general, and the method necessary for a concrete and critical history of religion in particular, Marx states:

'It is in fact much easier to uncover the earthly kernel within nebulous religious ideas, through analysis, than it is to do the opposite, to see how these heavenly forms develop out of actual concrete relations.

The latter is the only materialist and therefore scientific method. A theoretical method which was content in good Feuerbachian fashion to reduce all ideological

representations to their material and earthly kernel would be abstract and undialectical. A revolutionary practice confined to direct action against the terrestrial kernel of nebulous religious ideas, and unconcerned with overthrowing and superseding these ideologies themselves, would be no less so. When vulgar-Marxism adopts this abstract and negative attitude to the reality of ideologies, it makes exactly the same mistake as those proletarian theoreticians) past and present, who use the Marxist thesis of the economic determination of legal relations, state forms and political action, to argue that the proletariat can and should confine itself to direct economic action alone. It is well known that Marx strongly attacked tendencies of this kind in his polemics against Proudhon and others. In different phases of his life, wherever he came across views like this, which still survive in contemporary syndicalism, Marx always emphasised that this 'transcendental underestimation' of the State and political action was completely unmateralist. It was therefore theoretically inadequate and practically dangerous.

This dialectical conception of the relationship of economics to politics became such an unalterable part of Marxist theory that even the vulgar-Marxists of the Second International were unable to deny that the problem of the revolutionary transition existed, at least *in theory*, although they ignored the problem *in practice*. No orthodox Marxist could even in principle have claimed that a theoretical and practical concern with politics was unnecessary for Marxism. This was left to the syndicalists, some of whom invoke Marx, but none of whom have ever claimed to be orthodox Marxists. However, many good Marxists did adopt a theoretical and practical position on the reality of ideology which

was identical to that of the syndicalists. These materialists are with Marx in condemning the syndicalist refusal of political action and in declaring that the social movement must include the political movement. They often argue against anarchists that even after the victorious proletarian revolution, and in spite of all the changes undergone by the bourgeois State, politics will long continue to be a reality. Yet these very people fall straight into the anarcho-syndicalist 'transcendental underestimation' of ideology when they are told that *intellectual* struggle in the ideological field cannot be replaced or eliminated by the social movement of proletariat alone, or by its social and political movements combined. Even today most Marxist theoreticians conceive of the efficacy of so-called intellectual phenomena in a purely negative, abstract and undialectical sense, when they should analyse this domain of social reality with the materialist and scientific method moulded by Marx and Engels. Intellectual life should be conceived in union with social and political life, and social being and becoming (in the widest sense, as economics, politics or law) should be studied in union with social consciousness in its many different manifestations, as a real yet also ideal (or 'ideological') component of the historical process in general. Instead all consciousness is approached with totally abstract and basically metaphysical dualism, and declared to be a reflection of the one really concrete and material developmental process, on which it is completely dependent (even if relatively independent, still dependent in the last instance).

Given this situation, any theoretical attempt to restore what Marx regarded as the only scientific, dialectical materialist conception and treatment of *ideological*



realities, inevitably encounters even greater theoretical obstacles than an attempt to restore the correct Marxist theory of the State. The distortion of Marxism by the epigones in the question of the *State and politics* merely consisted in the fact that the most prominent theoreticians of the Second International never dealt concretely enough with the most vital political problems of the revolutionary transition. However, they at least agreed in abstract, and emphasised strongly in their long struggles against anarchists and syndicalists that, for materialism, not only the economic structure of society, which underlay all other socio-historical phenomena, but also the juridical and political superstructure of Law and the State were *realities*. Consequently, they could not be ignored or dismissed in an anarcho-syndicalist fashion: they had to be overthrown in reality by a political revolution. In spite of this, many vulgar-Marxists to this day have never, even in theory, admitted that intellectual life and forms of social consciousness are comparable realities. Quoting certain statements by Marx and especially Engels they simply explain away the *intellectual (ideological) structures of society* as a *mere pseudo-reality* which only exists in the minds of ideologues - as error, imagination and illusion, devoid of a genuine object. At any rate, this is supposed to be true for all the so-called 'higher' ideologies. For this conception, political and legal representatives may have an ideological and unreal character, but they are at least related to something real - the institutions of Law and the State, which comprise the superstructure of the society in question. On the other hand, the 'higher' ideological representations (men's religions, aesthetic and philosophical conceptions) correspond to no real object. This can be formulated concisely, with only a slight caricature, by saying that for vulgar-Marxism there are

*three degrees of reality*: (i) the economy, which in the last instance is the only objective and totally non-ideological reality; (2) Law and the State, which are already somewhat less real because clad in ideology, and (3) pure ideology which is objectless and totally unreal ('pure rubbish').

To restore a genuine dialectically materialist conception of intellectual reality, it is first necessary to make a few mainly terminological points. The key problem to settle here is how in general to approach the relationship of consciousness to its object. Terminologically, it must be said that it never occurred to Marx and Engels to describe social consciousness and intellectual life merely as ideology. Ideology is only a false consciousness, in particular one that mistakenly attributes an autonomous character to a partial phenomena of social life. Legal and political representations which conceive Law and the State to be independent forces above society are cases in point. In the passage where Marx is most precise about his terminology, he says explicitly that within the complex of material relations that Hegel called civil society, "the social relations of production ... the economic structure of society forms the real foundation on which arise juridical and political superstructures and to which determinate forms of social consciousness correspond". In particular, these forms of social consciousness which are no less real than Law and the State, include commodity fetishism, the concept of value, and other economic representations derived from them. Marx and Engels analysed these in their critique of political economy. What is strikingly characteristic of their treatment is that they never refer to this basic economic ideology of bourgeois society as an ideology. In their terminology only "the legal, political, religious,

aesthetic or philosophical forms of consciousness" are ideological. Even these need not be so in all situations, but become so only under specific conditions which have already been stated. The special position now allotted to forms of economic consciousness marks the new conception of philosophy which distinguishes the fully matured dialectical materialism of the later period from its undeveloped earlier version. The theoretical and practical criticisms of philosophy is henceforward relegated to the second, third, fourth or even last but one place in their critique of society. The 'critical philosophy' which the Marx of the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* saw as his essential task became a more radical critique of society, which went to the roots of it through a critique of political economy. Marx once said that a critic could '*start from any form of philosophical and practical consciousness* and develop from the specific forms of existent reality, its true reality and final end'. But he later became aware that no juridical relations, constitutional structures or forms of social consciousness can be understood in themselves or even in Hegelian or post-Hegelian terms of the general development of the human Spirit. For they are *rooted* in the material conditions of life that form 'the material basis and skeleton' of social organisation as a whole. A radical critique of bourgeois society can no longer start from 'any' form of theoretical or practical consciousness whatever, as Marx thought as late as 1843. It must start from the particular forms of consciousness which have found their scientific expression in the political economy of bourgeois society. Consequently the critique of political economy is theoretically and practically the first priority. Yet even this deeper and more radical version of Marx's revolutionary critique of society never ceases to be a critique of the *whole* of bourgeois society and so of

*all* its forms of consciousness. It may seem as if Marx and Engels were later to criticise philosophy only in an occasional and haphazard manner. In fact, far from neglecting the subject, they actually developed their critique of it in a more profound and radical direction. For proof, it is only necessary to re-establish the full revolutionary meaning of Marx's critique of political economy, as against certain mistaken ideas about it which are common today. This may also serve to clarify both its place in the whole system of Marx's critique of society, and its relation to his critique of ideologies like philosophy.

It is generally accepted that the critique of political economy - the most important theoretical and practical component of the Marxist theory of society - includes not only a critique of the material relations of production of the capitalist epoch but also of its specific forms of social consciousness. Even the pure and impartial 'scientific science' of vulgar-Marxism acknowledges this. Hilferding admits that scientific knowledge of the economic laws of a society is also a 'scientific politics' in so far as it shows 'the determinant factors which define the *will of the classes* in this society'. Despite this relation of economics to politics, however, in the totally abstract and undialectical conception of vulgar-Marxism, the critique of political economy has a purely theoretical role as a 'science'. Its function is to criticise the errors of bourgeois economics, classical or vulgar. By contrast, a proletarian political party uses the results of critical and scientific investigation for its practical ends - ultimately the overthrow of the real economic structure of capitalist society and of its relations of production. (On occasion, the results of this Marxism can also be used against the

proletarian party itself, as by Simkhovitch or Paul Lensch.)

The major weakness of vulgar socialism is that, in Marxist terms, it clings quite 'unscientifically' to a naive realism - in which both so-called common sense, which is the 'worst metaphysician', and the normal positivist science of bourgeois society, draw a sharp line of division between consciousness and its object. Neither are aware that this distinction had ceased to be completely valid even for the transcendental perspective of critical philosophy, and has been completely superseded in dialectical philosophy. At best, they imagine that something like this might be true of Hegel's idealist dialectic. It is precisely this, they think, that constitutes the 'mystification' which the dialectic according to Marx, 'suffered at Hegel's hands'. It follows therefore for them that this mystification must be completely eliminated from the rational form of the dialectic: the materialist dialectic of Marx. In fact, we shall show, Marx and Engels were very far from having any such dualistic metaphysical conception of the relationship of consciousness to reality - not only in their first (philosophical) period but also in their second (positive-scientific) period. It never occurred to them that they could be misunderstood in this dangerous way. Precisely because of this, they sometimes did provide considerable pretexts for such misunderstandings in certain of their formulations (although these can easily be corrected by a hundred times as many other formulations). For the *coincidence of consciousness and reality* characterises every dialectic, including Marx's dialectical materialism. Its consequence is that the material relations of production of the capitalist epoch only are what they are in combination with the forms in

which they are reflected in the pre-scientific and bourgeois-scientific consciousness of the period; and they could not subsist in reality without these forms of consciousness. Setting aside any philosophical considerations, it is therefore clear that *without this coincidence of consciousness and reality, a critique of political economy could never have become the major component of a theory of social revolution*. The converse follows. Those Marxist theoreticians for whom Marxism was no longer essentially a theory of social revolution could see no need for this dialectical conception of the coincidence of reality and consciousness: it was bound to appear to them as theoretically false and unscientific.

In the different periods of their revolutionary activity, Marx and Engels speak of the relationship of consciousness to reality at the economic level, or the higher levels of politics and law, or on the highest levels of art, religion and philosophy. It is always necessary to ask in what direction these remarks are aimed (they are nearly always, above all in the late period, only remarks!). For their import is very different, depending on whether they are aimed at Hegel's idealist and speculative method or at 'the ordinary method', essentially Wolff's metaphysical method, which has become fashionable once again'. After Feuerbach had 'dispatched speculative concepts', the latter re-emerged in the new natural-scientific materialism of Büchner, Vogt and Moleschott and 'even bourgeois economists wrote large rambling books' inspired by it. From the outset, Marx and Engels had to clarify their position only with regard to the first, Hegelian method. They never doubted that they had issued from it. Their only problem was how to change the Hegelian dialectic from a method proper to a superficially idealist, but secretly materialist

conception of the world into the guiding principle of an explicitly materialist view of history and society. Hegel had already taught that a philosophico-scientific method was not a mere form of thought which could be applied indiscriminately to any content. It was rather 'the structure of the whole presented in its pure essence'. Marx made the same point in an early writing: 'Form has no value if it is not the form of its content.' As Marx and Engels said, it then became a logical and methodological question of 'stripping the dialectical method of its idealist shell and presenting it in the simple form in which it becomes the only correct form of intellectual development'. Marx and Engels were confronted with the abstract speculative form in which Hegel bequeathed the dialectical method and which the different Hegelian schools had developed in an even more abstract and formal way. They therefore made vigorous counter-statements, such as: all thought is nothing but the 'transformation of perceptions and representations into concepts'; even the most general categories of thought are only 'abstract, unilateral relations of a living totality that is already given'; an object which thought comprehends as real 'remains as before, independent and external to the mind. Nevertheless, all their lives they rejected the undialectical approach which counterposes the thought, observation, perception and comprehension of an immediately given reality to this reality, as if the former were themselves also immediately given independent essences. This is best shown by a sentence from Engels' attack on Dühring, which is doubly conclusive because it is widely believed that the later Engels degenerated into a thoroughly naturalistic-materialist view of the world by contrast to Marx, his more philosophically literate companion. It is precisely in one of his last writings that Engels, in the same breath

as he describes thought and consciousness as products of the human brain and man himself as a product of nature, also unambiguously protests against the wholly 'naturalistic' outlook which accepts consciousness and thought 'as something given, something straightforwardly opposed to Being and to Nature'. The method of Marx and Engels is not that of an abstract materialism, but of a dialectical materialism: it is therefore the only scientific method. For Marxism, pre-scientific, extra-scientific and scientific consciousness no longer exist over and against the natural and (above all) social-historical world. They exist within this world as a real and objective component of it, if also an 'ideal' one. This is the first specific difference between the materialist dialectic of Marx and Engels, and Hegel's idealist dialectic. Hegel said that the theoretical consciousness of an individual could not 'leap over' his own epoch, the world of his time. Nevertheless he inserted the world into philosophy far more than he did philosophy into the world. This first difference between the Hegelian and Marxist dialectic is very closely related to a second one. As early as 1844 Marx wrote in *The Holy Family*:

'Communist workers well know that property, capital, money, wage-labour and such like, far from being idealist fantasies are highly practical and objective products of their own alienation; they must be transcended in a practical and objective way so that man can become man, not only in thought and in consciousness, but in his (social) Being and in his life.'

This passage states with full materialist clarity that, given the unbreakable interconnection of all real phenomena in bourgeois society as a whole, its forms of



consciousness cannot be abolished through thought alone. These forms can only be abolished in thought and consciousness by a simultaneous *practico-objective overthrow* of the material relations of production themselves, which have hitherto been comprehended through these forms. This is also true of the highest forms of social consciousness, such as religion, and of medium levels of social being and consciousness, such as the family. This consequence of the new materialism is implied in the [\*Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right\*](#), and is explicitly and comprehensively developed in the *Theses on Feuerbach* which Marx wrote in 1845 to clarify his own ideas.

['The question of whether objective truth corresponds to human thought is not a theoretical question but a practical one. Man must prove the truth - that is, the reality, the power, and the immanence of his thought, in practice. The dispute about the reality or unreality of thought thought isolated from practice is purely scholastic.'](#)

It would be a dangerous misunderstanding to think that this means that criticism in practice merely replaces criticism in theory. Such an idea merely replaces the philosophical abstraction of pure theory with an opposite anti-philosophical abstraction of an equally pure practice. It is not in 'human practice' alone, but only ['in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice'](#) that Marx as a dialectical materialist locates the rational solution of all mysteries that 'lure theory into mysticism'. The translation of the dialectics from its mystification by Hegel to the ['rational form'](#) of Marx's materialist dialectic essentially means that it has become the guiding principle of a single theoretical-practical and

critical-revolutionary activity. It is a 'method that is by its very nature critical and revolutionary'.

Even in Hegel 'the theoretical was essentially contained in the practical'. 'One must not imagine that man thinks on the one hand and wills on the other, that he has Thought in one pocket and Will in another; this would be a vacuous notion'. For Hegel, the practical task of the Concept in its 'thinking activity' (in other words, philosophy) does not lie in the domain of ordinary 'practical human and sensuous activity' (Marx). It is rather 'to grasp what is, for that which is, is Reason'." By contrast, Marx concludes the self-clarification of his own dialectical method with the eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach:

'The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, it is now a question of *changing* it.'

This does not mean, as the epigones imagine, that all philosophy is shown to be mere fantasy. It only expresses a categorical rejection of all theory, philosophical or scientific, that is not *at the same time* practice - real, terrestrial immanent, human and sensuous practice, and not the speculative activity of the philosophical idea that basically does nothing but comprehend itself. ">Theoretical criticism and practical overthrow are here inseparable activities, not in any abstract sense but as a concrete and real alteration of the concrete and real world of bourgeois society. Such is the most precise expression of the new materialist principle of the scientific socialism of Marx and Engels.

We have now shown the real consequences of the dialectical materialist principle for a Marxist conception

of the relationship of consciousness to reality. By the same token, we have shown the error of all abstract and undialectical conceptions found among various kinds of vulgar-Marxists in their theoretical and practical attitudes to so-called intellectual reality. Marx's dictum is true not just of forms of economic consciousness in the narrower sense, but all forms of social consciousness: they are not mere chimeras, but 'highly objective and highly practical' social realities and consequently 'must be abolished in a practical and objective manner'. The naively metaphysical standpoint of sound bourgeois common sense considers thought independent of being and defines truth as the correspondence of thought to an object that is external to it and 'mirrored' by it. It is only this outlook that can sustain the view that all forms of economic consciousness (the economic conceptions of a pre-scientific and unscientific consciousness, as well as scientific economics itself) have an objective meaning because they correspond to a reality (the material relations of production which they comprehend) whereas all higher forms of representation are merely objectless fantasies which will automatically dissolve into their essential nullity after the overthrow of the economic structure of society, and the abolition of its juridical and political superstructure. Economic ideas themselves only *appear* to be related to the material relations of production of bourgeois society in the way an image is related to the object it reflects. In fact they are related to them in the way that a specific, particularly defined part of a whole is related to the other parts of this whole. Bourgeois economics belongs with the material relations of production to bourgeois society as a totality. This totality also contains political and legal representations and their apparent objects, which bourgeois politicians and jurists - the 'ideologues of private property' (Marx) -

treat in an ideologically inverted manner as autonomous essences. Finally, it also includes the higher ideologies of the art, religion and philosophy of bourgeois society. If it seems that there are no objects which these representations can reflect, correctly or incorrectly, this is because economic, political or legal representations do not have particular objects which exist independently either, isolated from the other phenomena of bourgeois society. To counterpose such objects to these representations is an abstract and ideological bourgeois procedure. They merely express bourgeois society as a totality in a particular way, just as do art, religion and philosophy. Their ensemble forms the *spiritual structure* of bourgeois society, which corresponds to its economic structure, just as its legal and political superstructure corresponds to this same basis. All these forms must be subjected to the revolutionary social criticism of scientific socialism, which embraces the whole of social reality. They must be criticised in theory and overthrown in practice, together with the economic, legal and political structures of society and at the same time as them. Just as political action is not rendered unnecessary by the economic action of a revolutionary class, so intellectual action is not rendered unnecessary by either political or economic action. On the contrary it must be carried through to the end in theory and practice, as revolutionary scientific criticism and agitational work before the seizure of state power by the working class, and as scientific organisation and ideological dictatorship after the seizure of state power. If this is valid for intellectual action against the forms of consciousness which define bourgeois society in general, it is especially true of philosophical action. Bourgeois consciousness necessarily sees itself as apart from the world and independent of it, as pure critical philosophy

and impartial science, just as the bourgeois State and bourgeois Law appear to be above society. This consciousness must be philosophically fought by the revolutionary materialistic dialectic, which is the philosophy of the working class. This struggle will only end when the whole of existing society and its economic basis have been totally overthrown in practice, and this consciousness has been totally surpassed and abolished in theory. — ‘Philosophy cannot be abolished without being realised.’

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## UM DIE ARBEITERREGIERUNG

Diskussionsrede auf dem Leipziger Parteitage

KARL KORSCH (FEBRUAR 1923)

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In: **Neue Zeitung**, 5. Jg. Nr.35 (10.2.1923).

Wieder in: **Bericht über die Verhandlungen des III. (8.) Parteitages der KPD** (Leipzig vom 28.1. bis 1.2.1923), Berlin 1923. S.359-361 (nicht völlig identisch). S.507-509.

Karl Korsch, **Politische Texte** (Hrsg. von Erich Gerlach u. Jürgen Seifert), Wien o.D., S.45-50.

Transkription u. HTML-Markierung: [Einde O'Callaghan](#) für das **Marxists' Internet Archive**.

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Einer der Hauptgegensätze, um die hier gestritten wird, besteht darin, daß gewisse Dinge, z.B. die Bewaffnung des Proletariats, von der einen Seite als *Aufgaben* der Arbeiterregierung, von der anderen Seite als *Voraussetzungen* für die Teilnahme an der Arbeiterregierung betrachtet werden. An dieser Frage zeigt sich besonders deutlich, daß ein großer Teil der Gegensätze zwischen beiden Richtungen darauf zurückzuführen ist, daß die Bedingungen der proletarischen Aktion von der einen Seite lebendig und dialektisch, von der anderen Seite starr und undialektisch aufgefaßt werden. Genosse Maslow [1] verglich die von uns der Arbeiterregierung gesetzte Aufgabe, sich durch die Bewaffnung des Proletariats ihre eigene feste Grundlage selbst zu schaffen, mit einer „Jungfernzeugung“. Was aber der Genosse Maslow hier „Jungfernzeugung“ nennt, ist tatsächlich nichts anderes, als was ein Marx und Engels einst als dialektische

Entwicklung bezeichnet haben. Ich möchte nun, soweit es die kurze Redezeit mir erlaubt, im einzelnen zeigen, wie von Anfang an bis zu Ende die ganze Auffassung der Frage der Arbeiterregierung auf der Seite der sogenannten Linken durchaus undialektisch ist. Und ich möchte zugleich dieser unfruchtbaren und passiven undialektischen Auffassung die wirklich dialektische gegenüberstellen, die allein uns zur weltverändernden Tat führen kann. Ich beginne mit einem Punkt, über den wir alle einig sind. Wir sind darüber einig, daß die erste und praktisch wahrscheinlich sogar die größte Bedeutung der Parole der Arbeiterregierung eine propagandistische ist. Die Resolution des 4. Weltkongresses beginnt mit dem Satze: „Als allgemeine propagandistische Formel ist die Arbeiterregierung fast überall zu gebrauchen.“ [2] Dies ist also der *Ausgangspunkt*, von dem aus alles übrige zu entwickeln ist. Blicken wir heute zurück auf jene andere Parole, die geschichtlich als Vorläufer der Arbeiterregierung betrachtet werden muß, das ist die in Jena aufgestellte Parole der Erfassung der Sachwerte [3], und fragen wir uns, worin hat in der Praxis der letzten anderthalb Jahre die Bedeutung dieser Parole tatsächlich bestanden, so sehen wir, daß diese Bedeutung sogar ganz ausschließlich eine propagandistische gewesen ist. Darüber also müssen wir einig sein, auch der Wert der Parole der Arbeiterregierung ist zunächst und vor allem ein propagandistischer. Dabei kann man aber die t„Propaganda“ in zweifacher Weise auffassen: undialektisch wie die Genossen Maslow und Ruth Fischer oder dialektisch wie die Genossen Brandler und Kleine. [4] Auch die sogenannte Linke will Propaganda machen. Aber sie faßt diese Propaganda-Aufgabe abstrakt, und darum fordert sie zwar die Arbeiterregierung, fügt aber im gleichen Atemzug eine

Erklärung dieser Forderung hinzu, die es auch dem harmlosesten Gemüt auf den ersten Blick zeigt, daß hier das Wort „Arbeiterregierung“ wirklich nichts anderes bedeutet als ein Pseudonym für die Diktatur des Proletariats. Denn die Bewaffnung der Arbeiter als Voraussetzung der Arbeiterregierung bedeutet doch, die angebliche Arbeiterregierung ist schon die Diktatur. Ebenso undialektisch versteht die sogenannte Linke auch die Parole der Einheitsfront. Denn sie versteht darunter, wie Rüdiger Fischer in ihrem Artikel [5] gesagt hat, und wie vorhin auch der Genosse Maslow hier in seinem Korreferat gesagt hat, in Wirklichkeit „die Führung des Kampfes *allein mit der Kommunistischen Partei*“. [6] Der Weltkongreß aber spricht durchaus nicht davon, daß der Kampf allein mit der Kommunistischen Partei geführt werden soll, sondern spricht ausdrücklich von der „Koalition der Arbeiterparteien“. [7] Auch wir wollen die Einheitsfront und Arbeiterregierung als Propaganda benutzen. Aber wir wissen dabei, daß für eine kommunistische Partei das wirkliche Ziel ihrer Propagandatätigkeit in nichts anderem besteht als in der Organisation des wirklichen revolutionären Kampfes der proletarischen Klasse. Wollen wir diesen Zweck erreichen, so kann uns hierfür im gegenwärtigen Augenblick die chemisch reine Formel der „Diktatur des Proletariats“ nichts nützen, weil sie diesen wirklichen Zweck nicht erfüllen, den wirklichen Kampf der Arbeiterklasse im gegenwärtigen Augenblick nicht organisieren kann. Und das ist doch der einzige Zweck; dem unsere ganze Auseinandersetzung und all unser Denken und all unser Reden einzig und allen dient: wir wollen damit zum Handeln kommen, zu jener *wirklichen Bewegung*, von der Karl Marx gesagt hat, daß ein Schritt wirklicher Bewegung wichtiger ist als ein Dutzend Programme. [8] Die andere Seite aber bleibt mit ihren



chemisch reinen Formeln von Diktatur des Proletariats usw. immer in dem Reich des bloßen *Meinens*, von dem schon der Philosoph Hegel gesagt hat, es sei „ein weiches Element, dem sich leicht etwas *einbilden* läßt“. Uns kommt es aber nicht darauf an, uns etwas einzubilden, sondern die Wirklichkeit zu verändern. Und dazu müssen wir eben lernen, uns dialektisch einzustellen.

Wie undialektisch der Genosse Maslow alle diese Dinge ansieht, zeigt sich weiterhin in dem Satz, den er in seinen Artikeln und heute in seinem Korreferat [\[9\]](#) so sehr unterstrichen hat, daß die SPD als Partei nicht kämpfen *könne*, und daß, wenn sie es könnte, wir Kommunisten als Partei überflüssig wären und uns liquidieren müßten. Und ebenso undialektisch hat er ferner auch den Satz aufgestellt, daß die Kommunistische Partei keine Partei neben anderen Parteien sei. Diese beiden Sätze sind nicht in jedem Sinne falsch. Falsch sind sie, wenn man sie so versteht wie der Genosse Maslow, also undialektisch. Sie sind aber richtig, wenn man sie dialektisch versteht. Zunächst einmal kann man gar nicht leugnen, daß heute rein tatsächlich die Kommunistische Partei doch nur eine proletarische Partei neben anderen ist. Und auch die SPD ist heute zweifellos noch eine proletarische Partei. Sie ist sogar mehr: sie ist eine proletarische Massenorganisation, ganz ebenso gut wie die Betriebsräteorganisation des ADGB und wie die Gewerkschaften selbst. Um zu zeigen, in welchem Sinne der Satz Maslows, daß die SPD als Partei nicht kämpfen *könne*, zugleich richtig und falsch ist, will ich einen Vergleich gebrauchen, um populär zu sein. Denken Sie sich eine Kanone, eine große, mit viel Explosivstoff gefüllte Kanone, die aber nicht auf den Feind, sondern auf ein falsches Ziel gerichtet ist. Sie ist auf das falsche

Ziel nicht bloß gerichtet, sondern fest eingemauert, so daß man sie nicht leicht herumdrehen kann. Da gehört denn durchaus nicht die Intelligenz eines Intellektuellen dazu, um zu beweisen, daß eine solche Kanone auf den Feind nicht schießen *kann*.

Trotzdem aber besteht unsere Aufgabe, wenn wir in die Festung eindringen, diese vorhandenen, aber falsch gerichteten Explosivkräfte richtig zu organisieren, und so können wir auch den revolutionären Explosivstoff in den proletarischen Massen, die heute in der SPD auf ein falsches Ziel gerichtet sind, für den Kampf der proletarischen Klasse organisieren. Der „Kampf des Proletariats“ bedeutet auch zweierlei. In einem Sinn ist er immer da gewesen. Marx sagt im **Kommunistischen Manifest**: „Der Kampf des Proletariats gegen die Bourgeoisie beginnt *mit seiner Existenz*.“ [\[10\]](#) meinem anderen Sinn ist aber dieser Kampf doch auch heute noch nicht ganz wirklich da, weil er noch nicht vollständig organisiert, ein seiner wirklichen Ziele noch nicht klar bewußter Kampf ist. Da ist es denn reine Ideologie, diese Klarheit über das Endziel schon in den ersten Anfängen des Kampfes allen Mitkämpfern aufdrängen zu wollen. Vielmehr müssen wir uns bewußt sein, daß eine ganz klare, eine ganz bewußte Erfassung dieses Zieles bei den Massen sogar erst dann vorhanden sein wird, wenn die entscheidende Schlacht schon geschlagen und die Macht schon erobert ist.

Meine Redezeit ist abgelaufen, und ich kann diesen Gedanken- gang nicht mehr zu Ende durchführen, sonst könnte ich noch an allen übrigen Ausführungen des Genossen Maslow und der Genossin Ruth Fischer und auch an den Resolutionen, die von ihnen dem Parteitag vorgelegt sind, im einzelnen zeigen, wie überall dieselbe

*undialektische* Denkweise hervortritt. Mit einer solchen Denkweise würde unsere Partei immer eine bloße Sekte bleiben, die von einer reinen Formulierung ihrer Ziele zu immer reineren Formulierungen fortschreitet, dabei aber immer beim bloßen Denken und Reden bleibt und niemals das wird, was die Kommunistische Partei werden muß: *eine aktionsfähige proletarische Massenpartei.*

#### Anmerkungen

1. **Bericht über die Verhandlungen des III. (8.) Parteitages der KPD (Leipzig vom 28.1.-1.2.1923),** Berlin 1923, S.344. – *Arkadi Maslow* wurde 1920 als Vertreter der russischen Sektion in den Parteiausschuß gewählt, ab 1921 gemeinsam mit Ruth Fischer in der Leitung der Berliner Parteiorganisation tätig. Gehörte zur linken Opposition und war Theoretiker dieses Flügels.

2. *Über die Taktik der Komintern, Ziff.11, Die Arbeiterregierung* in: **Protokoll des IV. Weltkongresses der Kommunistischen Internationale, Petrograd-Moskau 5. November bis 5. Dezember 1922,** Hamburg 1923, Bd.II (Reprint, Erlangen 1972), S.1015

3. *Resolution zu den Steuer- und Wirtschaftskämpfen,* in: **Bericht über die Verhandlungen des II. (7.) Parteitages der Kommunistischen Partei Deutschlands (Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale), abgehalten in Jena vom 22. bis 26. August 1921,** Berlin 1922, S.415-424: *Erfassung und Beschlagnahme der Goldwerte für den Staat;*

*Beschlagnahme der Gold-Werte in Verbindung mit Arbeitskontrolle.*

4. Heinrich Brandler und August Kleine (= Samuel Guralski) wurden auf dem Parteitag 1923 in das Zentralkomitee gewählt; Brandler war schon in den Jahren 1920/21 Mitglied des ZK, zeitweilig auch Vorsitzender der KPD. Ruth Fischer gehörte wie Maslow zur linken Opposition; beide wurden nach der Oktoberniederlage 1923 auf dem 9. Parteitag in Frankfurt/Main (7. bis 11.4.1924) in das ZK gewählt.

5. Ruth Fischer, *Der Kampf um die Kommunistische Partei*, in: **Die Internationale**, Jg. 6, Heft 3 (1.2.1923), S.87-96, insbes. S.92: „Wir wollen die Einheitsfront insofern, als wir wirklich kämpfen wollen, auch als Kommunisten um die unmittelbaren Tagesforderungen des Proletariats. [...] Aber wir wollen diesen Kampf nicht in der Koalition mit der SPD als Partei [...] sondern wir wollen [...] die Kämpfe führen allein mit der Kommunistischen Partei in der Erkenntnis, daß die Frage des Sieges eine Frage des Werdens und Erstarkens der Kommunistischen Partei ist.“

6. Maslow, **a.a.O.**, S.388, (s. [Anm.1](#)).

7. *Über die Taktik der Komintern*, **a.a.O.**, S.1015 (s. [Anm.2](#)): „Einer offenen oder maskierten bürgerlich-sozialdemokratischen Koalition stellen die Kommunisten die Einheitsfront aller Arbeiter und eine Koalition aller Arbeiterparteien auf ökonomischem und politischem Gebiet zum Kampf gegen die bürgerliche Macht und ihrem schließlichen Sturz gegenüber.“

8. Karl Marx, **Kritik des Gothaer Programms**, *Brief an Wilhelm Bracke vom 5.5.1875*, MEW Bd.19, S.13.

9. Maslow, **a.a.O.**, S.335 u. 336, (s. Anm.1).

10. Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, **Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei**, 1848, MEW, Bd.4, S.470. Korsch zitiert aus dem Kopf und legt dabei den Akzent auf drei von ihm hervorgehobene Worte. Bei Marx heißt es: „Das Proletariat macht verschiedene Entwicklungsstufen durch. Sein Kampf gegen die Bourgeoisie beginnt mit seiner Existenz.“

## ZEHN JAHRE KLASSENKÄMPFE IN SOWJETRUßLAND

KARL KORSCH (1927)

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In: **Kommunistische Politik**, 2. Jg., Nr.17/18 (Oktober 1927), S.1-3.

Karl Korsch, **Politische Texte**, (Hrsg. von Erich Gerlach u. Jürgen Seifert), Wien o.D., S.180-94.

Transkription u. HTML-Markierung: [Einde O'Callaghan](#) für das **Marxists' Internet Archive**.

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Was in diesen Niederlagen erlag, war nicht die Revolution. Es waren die vorrevolutionären, traditionellen Anhängsel, Resultate gesellschaftlicher Verhältnisse, die sich noch nicht zu scharfen Klassengegensätzen Zugespitzt hatten – Personen, Illusionen, Vorstellungen, Projekte, wovon die revolutionäre Partei vor der Februarrevolution nicht frei war, wovon nicht der *Februarsieg*, sondern nur eine Reihe von *Niederlagen* sie befreien konnte.

Mit einem Wort: Nicht in seinen unmittelbaren tragikomischen Errungenschaften brach sich der revolutionäre Fortschritt Bahn, sondern umgekehrt in der Erzeugung einer geschlossenen, mächtigen Konterrevolution, in der Erzeugung eines Gegners, durch dessen Bekämpfung erst die Umsturzpartei zu einer wirklich revolutionären Partei heranreifte.

K. Marx, **Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich** [\[1\]](#)

In die brausenden Triumphgesänge, die heute in Sowjetrußland und in der ganzen Welt zur Feier des 10. Jahrestages der siegreichen Oktoberrevolution, des zehnjährigen Bestandes der sozialistischen Sowjetunion erklingen, fährt störend und ärgerlich ein schriller Mißton: der gerade in diesen Tagen zur Siedehitze ansteigende Fraktionskampf zwischen der herrschenden Stalin-Koalition und der Trotzkitisch-Sinowjewistischen „linken“ Opposition innerhalb der bolschewistischen Regierungspartei.

Hie Leninsches bolschewistisches ZK gegen kleinbürgerliche, menschewistische, sozialdemokratische Abweichungen! Hie orthodoxer revolutionärer Leninismus gegen thermidorianische Entartung! Was verbirgt sich hinter diesen beiden schönklingenden Parolen? Welche dieser beiden Richtungen, die trotz ihrer vielfachen „pazifistischen“ und „kapitulatorischen“ Anwendungen wie durch eine unsichtbare, unwiderstehliche Gewalt immer wieder in scharfen unversöhnlichen politischen Konflikt gegeneinander getrieben werden, kann es heute für sich in Anspruch nehmen, den echten Ring der bolschewistischen Leninschen Tradition in ihren Händen zu haben und vor der russischen und der gesamten internationalen Arbeiterklasse aufzutreten als wirkliche Fortsetzer jener revolutionären proletarischen Klassenpolitik, die zu dem glorreichen Oktober geführt hat?

Es ist ein äußerst vulgärer Primitivismus und das gerade Gegenteil der von Karl Marx angewendeten materialistisch-kritischen Methode, wenn manche zeitgenössische „Marxisten“ und „Revolutionäre“ auf diese Frage damit antworten, daß dieser ganze jetzige Fraktionskampf innerhalb der bolschewistischen

Regierungspartei seinem Wesen nach weiter nichts sei, als ein persönlicher Machtkampf ehrgeiziger Führerklüngel. Für diese „Marxisten“ hat Karl Marx seine **Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich** und seinen **18. Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte** umsonst geschrieben, hat umsonst gezeigt, wie die Anwendung seiner materialistischen Methode auf die laufende Zeitgeschichte gerade darin besteht, alle „politischen Konflikte“ bis einschließlich der gewöhnlichsten Streitigkeiten zwischen den verschiedenen politischen Gruppierungen eines Parlaments, einer Regierung, einer regierenden oder oppositionellen Partei „auf Interessenkämpfe der durch die ökonomische Entwicklung gegebenen Gesellschaftsklassen und Klassenfraktionen zurückzuführen und die einzelnen politischen Parteien nachzuweisen als den mehr oder weniger adäquaten [entsprechenden] politischen Ausdruck dieser selben Klassen und Klassenfraktionen“.

[\[2\]](#)

Umsonst hat Marx immer wieder darauf hingewiesen, daß es für diese materialistische Betrachtung geschichtlicher Vorgänge viel weniger darauf ankommt, was die beteiligten einzelnen Menschen und erst recht ganze Cliquen und Parteien „von sich meinen und sagen“, als auf die hinter diesen Phrasen und Einbildungen, hinter all diesen „alten Erinnerungen, persönlichen Feindschaften, Befürchtungen und Hoffnungen, Vorurteilen und Illusionen, Sympathien und Antipathien, Überzeugungen, Glaubensartikeln und Prinzipien“ [\[3\]](#) verborgenen *materiellen Interessen und die für diese Interessen eintretenden und kämpfenden gesellschaftlichen Klassen- und Klassenfraktionen*. Alle diese Lehren von Marx über die wirkliche materialistische Methode existieren nicht für unsere



Primitivisten. Hartnäckig wiederholen sie ihre triviale Weisheit, daß die Sinowjew und Trotzki „nicht besser als Stalin sind“, und daß darum der ganze zwischen ihnen geführte Krakeel für die von der russischen NEP~Bourgeoisie [\[4\]](#) und Bürokratie unterdrückten und ausgebeuteten russischen Proletarier und erst recht für das internationale Proletariat völlig gleichgültig wäre.

Es ist leicht zu sehen, daß diese scheinbar sehr radikale und revolutionäre Einstellung zu der bisherigen Entwicklung der russischen Sowjetunion im allgemeinen und zu den gegenwärtigen Fraktionskämpfen innerhalb der bolschewistischen Regierungspartei im besonderen ihrem Wesen nach eine gerade so „abstrakte“ und „idealistische“ Betrachtung der russischen Dinge ist, wie ihr scheinbarer Gegensatz, die offizielle „leninistische“ Legende über den seit dem Oktobersieg 1917 bzw. seit dem Übergang zur NEP 1921 begonnenen „Aufbau des Sozialismus in Sowjetrußland“. Beide bezeichnen als den wesentlichen Zug in der geschichtlich-gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung des „neuen Rußland“ seit 1917 nicht den Kampf, sondern den „Aufbau“. Die einen wollen nichts sehen und gelten lassen als den Aufbau eines angeblichen „Sozialismus“ in dem Lande der siegreichen proletarischen Revolution. Die anderen sehen umgekehrt in der Entwicklung der letzten zehn bzw. sieben Jahre nichts als den Triumph der bürgerlichen Konterrevolution auf dem Rücken eines durch 100-prozentigen Betrug und offene Gewalt geistig und physisch gelähmten Proletariats, also sozusagen nichts als den „Aufbau“ bzw. „Wiederaufbau“ und „Ausbau“ des Kapitalismus. Der angebliche „Marxismus“ der einen wie der anderen besteht darin, daß sie in diesem nächstliegenden, wichtigsten Stück Weltgeschichte gerade das nicht sehen, oder es doch

nicht in seinen konkreten Formen sehen, was nach der Lehre von Marx und Engels den einzigen wirklichen Inhalt der gesamten Geschichte bildet: die *Klassenkämpfe*, und besonders den *Kampf des Proletariats*, dieser in der heutigen Epoche der entwickelten kapitalistischen Gesellschaft einzigen „wirklich revolutionären Klasse“. Für die einen hat es in Rußland vor dem Oktober 1917 Klassenkämpfe, somit eine wirkliche Geschichte gegeben, es gibt sie aber seitdem „nicht mehr“. Für die anderen gibt es einen wirklichen Klassenkampf des Proletariats im heutigen Rußland „noch nicht wieder“; was heute und in den letzten zehn bzw. sieben Jahren des Wiederaufbaus der kapitalistischen Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft in Sowjetrußland vor sich geht, ist für sie nur erst passives Leiden, Unterdrückung und Ausbeutung, aber noch kein wiedererwachter, wenn auch vielfach noch unbewußt oder mit falschem Bewußtsein geführter *Klassenkampf des russischen Proletariats*.

Im Gegensatz zu diesen beiden flachen und falschen Anschauungen muß eine wirklich marxistische, das heißt *kritisch-materialistische Auffassung der durch die Oktoberrevolution von 1917 ausgelösten gesellschaftlichen Entwicklung*, und insbesondere auch der gegenwärtigen wie aller früheren Fraktionskämpfe in der KPSU ausgehen von der Anschauung der „zehn Jahre Sowjetrußland“ als einer *Periode neuer und neuartiger Klassenkämpfe*.

Die *siegreiche Oktoberrevolution 1917*, im Zusammenhang mit der gesamten, durch den einstweiligen Abschluß des *ersten imperialistischen Weltkrieges 1914-1918* geschaffenen internationalen Situation, stellte die Arbeiterklasse in dem

neugeschaffenen sowjetrussischen Gemeinwesen und zugleich das gesamte internationale Proletariat vor eine ungeheure Menge ungeheuer schwieriger, im höchsten Grade neuartiger, bis dahin gänzlich unerhörter *Klassenaufgaben*. Sie eröffnete damit zugleich eine jetzt bereits zehn Jahre andauernde Periode ebenso neuartiger, ebenso unerhörter *Klassenkämpfe*, teils zwischen dem in Rußland für einen weltgeschichtlichen Augenblick triumphierenden Proletariat und der zum offenen feindlichen Gegenstoß antretenden reaktionären Bourgeoisie der ganzen Welt, teils zwischen den verschiedenen, über die Ziele und Wege des Proletariats in dieser neuen Kampfperiode bis zur absoluten Gegensätzlichkeit uneinigen Richtungen und Strömungen innerhalb der (russischen und internationalen) Arbeiterklasse selbst, – angefangen von denen, die in ihren Zielsetzungen und Kampfmethoden über den Rahmen einer bürgerlich bäuerlichen Revolution in Rußland in dieser Periode überhaupt nicht hinausgehen wollten, endigend bei denen, die die in Rußland begonnene revolutionäre Aktion des internationalen Proletariats in einem Zuge und in einer ununterbrochen fortschreitenden Ausbreitung und Vertiefung als „Revolution in Permanenz“ weiterführen wollten bis zur absoluten Vollendung der proletarischen Weltrevolution, dazwischen eine Masse verschiedenartig kombinierter, und im Laufe der Zeit ihre Positionen mannigfach verändernde, vermittelnde Richtungen.

Die besondere Eigenart dieser durch die Oktoberrevolution eingeleiteten *Periode neuer Klassenkämpfe* besteht darin, daß hier zum ersten Male in der Geschichte ein einigermaßen dauerhafter und fester Sieg des Proletariats, wenn auch zunächst nur in einem Lande, errungen war. Hiermit war zwar – wie dies

auch *Lenin* selbst sogar in der Zeit, wo er in seiner *Praxis* schon einen anderen Weg eingeschlagen hatte, wenigstens in der *Theorie* immer festgehalten hat – an dem vom Marxismus bestimmten grundsätzlichen Verhältnis von „Reform und Revolution“ prinzipiell nichts geändert (vgl. hierzu besonders die vorsichtigen Formulierungen Lenins in seiner Gedächtnisrede zum 4. Jahrestag der Sowjetunion: *Über die Bedeutung des Goldes jetzt und nach dem vollen Sieg des Sozialismus*, **Prawda** vom 22.11.1922 [5]). Es blieb also auch, zumal unter der auf ein Land, noch dazu auf das ökonomisch rückständige Rußland beschränkten Diktatur, die zwar das Produkt einer wirklichen *proletarischen sozialistischen* Revolution, aber ganz gewiß nicht das Produkt einer „reinen“ proletarischen Revolution gewesen ist, die Notwendigkeit der Weiterführung des *Klassenkampfes*, das heißt also auch des *revolutionären* Klassenkampfes nicht nur im *internationalen Maßstab*, sondern auch für das *russische* Proletariat unverändert bestehen. Aber dieser revolutionäre proletarische Klassenkampf mußte in dem Staat der proletarischen Diktatur (keine noch so widerwärtigen klassenverräterischen Schändungen des Gedankens der proletarischen Diktatur durch die heutigen leninistischen Staatsmänner dürfen uns, die Anhänger der Marxschen Lehre von der revolutionären proletarischen Klassendiktatur, von der unumwundenen Anerkennung dieser Notwendigkeit abschrecken!) unvermeidlich eine starke Veränderung seiner Formen erfahren. Staatliche Repression gegen die bisher herrschende einheimische Bourgeoisie, äußere Abwehrkriege gegen die feindliche kapitalistische Umwelt sind in Sowjetrußland und werden in jedem künftigen Staat der proletarischen Machteroberung als neue Formendes Klassenkampfes zu den bisherigen mehr unmittelbaren Formen der

Klassenkampfführung hinzutreten und sie teilweise ersetzen. (So verstanden, wird auch die vorübergehende Notwendigkeit der „sozialistischen Vaterlandsverteidigung“ wie die unter Umständen gegebene revolutionäre Zweckmäßigkeit der „roten Intervention“ nach außen, des „roten Terrors“ nach innen von keinem revolutionären Marxisten grundsätzlich bestritten; ihre besondere Betonung und Hervorkehrung durch die russischen Bolschewiki und ihre allzu bolschewisierten Nachredner in den außerrussischen Sektionen der Komintern gehört aber schon zu jenen „schlechten Diensten“, die nach einem guten Ausspruch Rosa Luxemburgs diejenigen dem internationalen Sozialismus erweisen, die „in seine Speicher als neue Erkenntnisse all die durch Not und Zwang in Rußland eingegebenen Schiefheiten eintragen wollen, die letzten Endes nur Ausstrahlungen des Bankrotts des internationalen Sozialismus in diesem Weltkrieg waren“.

[6] Aber selbstverständlich – zum mindesten für jeden Marxisten selbstverständlich – bleibt trotz all dieser neuen organisatorischen Formen des Klassenkampfes unter den Bedingungen der proletarischen Diktatur in einem Lande, in dem die Klassen und Klassengegensätze in der ökonomischen Struktur der Gesellschaft, der realen Basis des gesamten neuen Staatswesens fortbestehen, *auch die Fortführung des unmittelbaren Klassenkampfes der Arbeiter in der alten „revolutionären“ Form eine absolute und durch keinerlei Dekrete oder neue „Theorien“ wegzuphantasierende, gegenüber allen Repressionen aus der materiellen Entwicklung heraus mit elementarer Gewalt immer wieder durchbrechende Notwendigkeit.*

So entsteht gerade durch die revolutionäre Eroberung der Macht, durch die Errichtung der proletarischen Diktatur

in dem neuen russischen Sowjetstaat jener ungeheure *neue Widerspruch*, in den sich das russische, das gesamte internationale Proletariat nach dem roten Oktober 1917 verstrickt fand und um dessen marxistische, klassenmäßige, *proletarisch-revolutionäre Lösung* das russische Proletariat und mit ihm zugleich auch – nur leider nach dem frühen Tode der einzigen *Rosa Luxemburg* nur in allzu geringem Grade und mit allzu geringen Kräften – die Vorhut des internationalen Proletariats seitdem theoretisch und praktisch gerungen hat. Aus diesem Widerspruch entspringen all jene mannigfaltigen politischen Konflikte und Richtungskämpfe, die in dem neuen, durch die Oktoberrevolution geschaffenen Sowjetstaat und besonders innerhalb der diesen Staat regierenden bolschewistischen Partei schon vom ersten Augenblick, sozusagen von der Geburtsstunde des Sowjetstaates an, ausgebrochen sind und in der ganzen seitdem verstrichenen zehnjährigen Periode mit zeitweilig wechselnder, in den letzten Jahren wieder schnell zunehmender Heftigkeit bis zum heutigen Tage ununterbrochen fortgedauert haben. Auf der einen Seite stehen in diesen unaufhörlichen Kämpfen diejenigen, die entweder (wie es für eine bestimmte Periode, um das Jahr 1920, mit ganz besonderer Schärfe gerade der heutige Oppositionsführer *Trotzki* getan hat) jede weitere Fortsetzung des unmittelbaren Klassenkampfes für überflüssig und schädlich halten, oder aber (entsprechend der Praxis Lenins) diesen Kampf wenigstens auf solche Formen einschränken wollen, die grundsätzlich auf dem Boden dieses revolutionär errungenen Sowjetstaates und im Rahmen der durch seine Existenz gegebenen „Staatsnotwendigkeiten“ stehen bleiben. (Vgl. hierzu z.B. Lenins „vermittelnde“ Stellungnahme in der Gewerkschaftsdiskussion Ende

1920/Anfang 1921 [7], wo er im Gegensatz zu der damaligen Stellung Trotzki's zwar die gewerkschaftlichen Kämpfe der Arbeiter um Lohn und sonstige Arbeitsbedingungen auch in dem revolutionären „Arbeiterstaat“ als zulässig und notwendig anerkennt, dagegen alle darüber hinausgehenden Forderungen der damaligen „Arbeiteropposition“ der Schljapnikow und Genossen für eine „syndikalistische und anarchistische Abweichung“ erklärt, die unvereinbar sei mit der Zugehörigkeit zur regierenden kommunistischen Partei und deren Propaganda unzulässig sei in dem Staat der proletarischen Diktatur!)

Diesen Vertretern der – angeblichen oder wirklichen – „revolutionären Staatsnotwendigkeiten“ in dem neuen, sich immer mehr befestigenden und „entwickelnden“ und ganz und gar nicht „absterbenden“ Diktaturstaat treten von der anderen Seite entgegen die im Laufe dieser zehn Jahre trotz aller Unterdrückungsversuche immer von neuem wiederholten Vorstöße derer, die auch diesem neuen Sowjetstaat und seinen angeblichen oder wirklichen „Notwendigkeiten“ gegenüber in der einen oder anderen Form, mit mehr oder weniger klarem Bewußtsein, anfangs oft ganz unbewußt oder mit falschem Bewußtsein und bis zum heutigen Tage immer noch im höchsten Grade inkonsquent die unmittelbaren, aus der materiellen Entwicklung neu und ursprünglich entstehenden Bedürfnisse und Interessen der proletarischen Klasse vertreten. *Staatsnotwendigkeiten gegen proletarische Klassennotwendigkeiten* – so lautet auch in dieser neuen Revolution des 20. Jahrhunderts, wo die proletarische Klassenbewegung nicht mehr bloß eine Unterströmung gebildet hat, wie in den bürgerlichen Revolutionen des 19. Jahrhunderts, sondern angewachsen ist zu dem alles andere beherrschenden und

mitreißenden großen Strom, der *objektive Widerspruch*, vor den sich infolge des anfänglichen Sieges und des darauf folgenden Stehenbleibens und Zurückflutens der revolutionären Entwicklung die einzige wirklich konsequent und rücksichtslos revolutionäre Klasse, das russische und mit ihm das gesamte internationale Proletariat am Ende wiederum gestellt sieht. Und gerade der große geschichtliche Fortschritt, daß diese Revolution von der proletarischen Klasse nicht mehr bloß praktisch erkämpft, sondern auch unter ihren eigenen Losungen durchgeführt worden ist, macht nun die wirkliche, klassenmäßige, *revolutionäre Lösung* dieses entstandenen Widerspruches für dieses Proletariat nur um so schwieriger und qualvoller.

In allen früheren Revolutionen geschah diese „revolutionäre Lösung“ in der Weise, daß im weiteren Verlauf der Entwicklung die zunächst gegenüber der alten Staatsgewalt verbunden gewesenen Klassen zwangsläufig gegeneinander gestoßen wurden zu einer zweiten *Schlacht*, in welcher regelmäßig die proletarische Klasse erlag, durch welche aber dennoch und gerade durch diese Niederlagen des Proletariats einerseits die aus der ersten revolutionären Kampfperiode heraus entstandene *Republik* von den mit ihr zunächst verbundenen sozialen Illusionen und sozialistischen Zugeständnissen geschieden und die *bürgerliche Republik* offiziell als die herrschende herausgearbeitet wurde, andererseits zugleich die *proletarische Klasse* selbst von ihren hergebrachten Illusionen über den Charakter dieser Republik zwangsläufig befreit und ihrem künftigen wirklichen Klassengegner, der Bourgeoisie, Auge in Auge gegenüber gestellt wurde.



Alle Versuche, dieses gleiche Schema auf die Entwicklung des Klassenkampfes in dem *Sowjetrußland der letzten zehn Jahre* anzuwenden, sind zum Scheitern verurteilt. Gewiß trägt auch in diesen zehn Jahren, die seit dem roten Oktober 1917 vergangen sind, jeder bedeutendere Abschnitt der Revolutionsannalen die Überschrift „Niederlage des Proletariats“. Wie der revolutionäre proletarische *Staat* seine erste Niederlage nach außen gleich im ersten Stadium seiner Existenz erlitt in dem ihm aufgezwungenen Frieden von *Brest-Litowsk*, so erlitt gleichzeitig damit auch das russische Proletariat schon damals, sozusagen schon in der Geburtsstunde der proletarischen Diktatur, seine erste Niederlage als *Klasse* gegenüber einem in seinem Wesen damals noch unbestimmten Feind. Diese erste Klassenniederlage des russischen Proletariats kam politisch zum Ausdruck in den fehlgeschlagenen Versuchen derer, die der in dem neuen Sowjetstaat von Anfang an überhandnehmenden zentralistischen *Parteidiktatur* unter dem Losungswort des „demokratischen Zentralismus“ eine wirkliche Klassendiktatur, eine tatsächliche *Rätediktatur* entgegenzustellen strebten (Die hauptsächlichsten Führer der damaligen Gruppe des „demokratischen Zentralismus“, die Genossen *Smirnow*, *Sapronow* [8] und andere, bilden auch heute wieder den „linksten“ und die Klassenforderungen des russischen Proletariats am schärfsten und kühnsten zum Ausdruck bringenden Flügel innerhalb der gegen das Stalinsche Partei- und Staatsregime rebellierenden linken oppositionellen Gruppierungen.) Auf diese erste Klassenniederlage des russischen Proletariats folgte dann in der weiteren Entwicklung eine fast ununterbrochene Kette weiterer Niederlagen: die erste im Jahre 1920/21 (Niederlage der sogenannten „Arbeiteropposition“ *Schljanikows* [9],

Kronstädter Aufstand) – die zweite 1923/24 (erfolgreiche „leninistische“ Verschwörung der Stalin, Sinowjew und ihrer außerrussischen Trabanten Maslow und Ruth Fischer in Deutschland, Suzanne Giraud in Frankreich usw. gegen den sogenannten „Trotzkismus“, d.h. gegen den Versuch, den damals *Trotzki*, gemeinsam mit der alten Oppositionsgruppe des „demokratischen Zentralismus“ und verschiedenen anderen Oppositionsgruppen, unterstützt auch von der „Arbeitergruppe“ *Mjasnikows*, unternahm [\[10\]](#), um in dem Rußland der NEP die Klassenfragen wieder aufzurollen; Niederlage und Kapitulation Trotzki, Preisgabe *Mjasnikows* durch Trotzki) – die dritte jetzt im Jahre 1926/27 [\[11\]](#) (wiederholte Kapitulation der Führer des „linken“ Oppositionsblocks, Zurückschrecken *Trotzki* und *Sinowjews* vor einer rücksichtslosen Aufrollung der einzigen wirklichen und entscheidenden Frage, der Klassenfrage des russischen und internationalen Proletariats, Einschränkung der „Opposition“ in den Rahmen der sowjetrussischen „Staatsnotwendigkeiten“, tatsächliche Preisgabe der „Linkesten“, die die Klassenfrage in voller irdischer Lebensgröße auf die Tagesordnung setzen wollen.)

Aber keine dieser inneren „Niederlagen“ des russischen Proletariats in der weiteren Entwicklung des durch den siegreichen Oktober geschaffenen sowjetrussischen Gemeinwesens bedeutet jenen scharfen Einschnitt, den einst in der von Marx geschilderten Revolution von 1848 die Niederlage des Pariser Proletariats in der Klassenschlacht des 22. Juni bedeutet hat. Das russische Proletariat, einerseits durch die von ihm selbst und unter seinen eigenen Parolen vollbrachte Revolution ganz anders, als es bei jenen früheren proletarischen Unterströmungen bürgerlicher Revolutionen jemals der

Fall sein konnte, an das Produkt dieser seiner Revolution, seinen revolutionären Diktaturstaat gebunden, andererseits im Weltmaßstab seit 1921 allein geblieben und an Zahl und spezifischem Gewicht in dem neuen ökonomischen und politischen sowjetrussischen Gemeinwesen den anderen Klassen gegenüber in Wirklichkeit viel zu schwach, ist niemals in die Lage gekommen, für seine Forderungen in einer offenen Schlacht aufzutreten, um so zugleich den neuen revolutionären Staat, die „Sozialistische Sowjet-Republik“ zu zwingen, in seiner wahren Gestalt hervorzutreten als eine bloße neue Form des bürgerlichen Staats, dessen eingestandener Zweck es ist, die Herrschaft des Kapitals, die Sklaverei der Arbeit zu verewigen, und zugleich sich selbst als revolutionäre Klasse auch gegenüber diesem neuen Staat zu konstituieren.

Hier löst sich auch das für viele „links“ gestimmte Arbeiter in West-Europa wie in Rußland zunächst unauflösbar erscheinende Rätsel, wieso es denn gekommen ist, daß aus der glorreichen proletarischen Revolution des roten Oktober 1917 am Ende etwas so ganz anderes hervorgegangen ist. Für das einfache, abstrakte und undialektische Denken scheint es ein unlösbarer Widerspruch, wenn wir im gleichen Atemzuge die proletarische Revolution des roten Oktober preisen, und ihr geschichtliches Resultat, den heutigen Sowjetstaat, bezeichnen als einen neuen kapitalistischen Klassenstaat, der sich – vom Standpunkt des Proletariats aus betrachtet – schon heute, zehn Jahre nach dem roten Oktober 1917, von den alten kapitalistischen Staaten nur noch der Form nach, aber nicht mehr dem Inhalt nach unterscheidet. Und zur „Lösung“ dieses Widerspruchs suchen die meisten nach

einer Art von „Sündenfall“ (und die einen finden ihn schon in dem Brester Frieden von 1917, die anderen in dem Übergang zur NEP 1921, die dritten in der Entartung der russischen Partei „seit Lenins Tode“ 1924, die vierten erst in dem Übergang von der NEP zur Neo-NEP seit 1925 usw.), um so gewissermaßen von einem bestimmten Datum ab den „Untergang der proletarischen Diktatur“ und die „Umwandlung des revolutionären Arbeiterstaates in einen bürgerlichen Klassenstaat“, als vollzogene Tatsache registrieren zu können. Mit vollem Recht könnten hierauf die Stalinisten erwidern, daß ein solcher „Sündenfall“, ein solcher absolut entscheidender Bruch mit der bisherigen Ökonomie und Politik der ganzen Geschichte des Sowjetstaates und seiner regierenden Partei überhaupt nicht zu finden ist. Und wenn in dieser zehnjährigen Periode doch ein bestimmter Zeitpunkt mehr als alle anderen als der *Wendepunkt* von der fortschreitenden und ansteigenden zur zurückflutenden und abebbenden Entwicklung der russischen Oktoberrevolution erscheint, nämlich der *Wendepunkt des Jahres 1921*, so handelt es sich gerade bei dieser Veränderung in der Tat viel weniger um einen speziell in Rußland, in der inneren Entwicklung der russischen Oktoberrevolution und des neuen russischen Sowjetstaates eingetretenen Kurswechsel, als um eine damals im Zusammenhang mit der großen Weltwirtschaftskrise und ihrer beginnenden Überwindung im Weltmaßstabe eintretende Veränderung der gesamten ökonomischen und damit auch der gesamten politischen Situation. Gerade hier zeigt sich besonders deutlich das wirkliche Wesen der Entwicklung des neuen sowjetrussischen Gemeinwesens in der Periode nach dem Oktober 1917 als *ein fortgesetzter Klassenkampf nicht nur im russischen, sondern zugleich und vor allem auch im internationalen Maßstab*.

In Wirklichkeit beginnt also die bürgerliche Konterrevolution in dem neuen Rußland zugleich mit der proletarischen Revolution. Die ganze geschichtliche Periode, die auf den siegreichen Oktober 1917 folgt, ist – im russischen wie im internationalen Maßstab – erfüllt von diesen ununterbrochen fortgesetzten Kämpfen zwischen den verschiedenen gesellschaftlichen Klassen und Klassenfraktionen, die sich auf Grund der Vorkriegs- und Kriegsentwicklung in Rußland wie im internationalen Maßstab herausgebildet haben und so den vorgefundenen Ausgangspunkt bildeten sowohl für die *russische Oktoberrevolution 1917* als auch für die *allgemeine weltrevolutionäre Bewegung in der unmittelbaren Nachkriegsperiode 1918-1920*. Wenn aber aus diesen Kämpfen zunächst weder in Rußland, noch im internationalen Maßstab das Proletariat als der Sieger hervorgegangen ist, so ist dies nicht mehr allein zurückzuführen auf die bei Ausbruch dieser revolutionären Kämpfe in der Periode 1917-1920 bereits vorhandenen und von der revolutionären Bewegung vorgefundenen Kräfteverhältnisse der Klassen. *Entscheidend war vielmehr die inzwischen, besonders seit dem Jahre 1921 eingetretene Veränderung der ökonomischen Lage selbst und die dadurch bedingte Veränderung in dem Kräfteverhältnis, mit dem jene verschiedenen Klassen und Klassenfraktionen in die revolutionäre Bewegung ursprünglich hineingegangen waren, also letzten Endes eine weitgehende Umwälzung in den grundlegenden Bedingungen, unter denen in der nun beginnenden neuen Periode das gesamte internationale, und somit auch das russische Proletariat, seine Kämpfe zu führen hat.*

Auch für die in zehnjähriger Entwicklung allmählich und unmerklich herbeigeführte, heute am 10. Jahrestag der

„sozialistischen“ Sowjetunion der Sache nach bereits vollendete, neue Niederlage der im Oktober 1917 *siegreichen russischen Arbeiterklasse*, zugleich mit den neuen schweren Niederlagen, die in der gleichen Periode das gesamte internationale Proletariat im Weltmaßstab erlitten hat, gelten aber jene von uns diesem ganzen Artikel als Motto vorangestellten, weit in die Zukunft vor- ausgreifenden Sätze, durch die *Karl Marx* schon nach der ersten großen Niederlage des Proletariats in der französischen und gesamteuropäischen Revolution von 1848 dem revolutionären Proletariat den Weg gezeigt hat, wie es gerade aus diesen seinen unvermeidlichen Niederlagen neue Kräfte für seinen künftigen Kampf gewinnen und so die zeitweilige Niederlage in den endlichen Sieg umwandeln kann. Freilich sind auch heute – gerade wie vor 80 Jahren – diese dem Proletariat durch Marx gewiesenen Möglichkeiten der Ausnutzung der Niederlage zur *Heranreifung einer wirklich revolutionären proletarischen Klassenpartei* objektiv unerfüllte *Möglichkeiten* geblieben; sie sind eben darum für uns subjektiv als dringliche, von uns praktisch zu erfüllende revolutionäre *Aufgabe* bestehen geblieben. Für die gemeinschaftliche Lösung dieser gemeinsamen marxistischen Aufgabe rufen wir den russischen klassenbewußten Proletariern und der gesamten klassenbewußten Vorhut des Proletariats der ganzen Welt heute, am 10. Jahrestag des roten Oktober 1917, von neuem die alte, mächtige marxistische Losung zu:

„*Proletarier aller Länder, vereinigt Euch!*“

Anmerkungen

1. Karl Marx, Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich 1848 bis 1850, MEW, Bd.7, S.11

2. Friedrich Engels, Einleitung zu Marx' Klassenkämpfen in Frankreich (1895), MEW, Bd.22, S.510.

3. Karl Marx, Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte, MEW, Bd.8, S.139.

4. NEP = Neue Ökonomische Politik 1921-1927.

5. W.I. Lenin, *Über die Bedeutung des Goldes jetzt und nach dem vollen Sieg des Sozialismus* (5. November 1921, **Prawda**, 6./7. November 1921, **Werke**, Bd.33, S.90-98.

6. Rosa Luxemburg, Die russische Revolution, Hrsgg. und eingeleitet von Paul Levi, Berlin 1922, S.118; Neudruck: R. Luxemburg, **Politische Schriften**, Bd. III, Frankfurt/Wien 1968, S.140.

7. Vgl. W.I. Lenin, *Über die Gewerkschaften, die gegenwärtige Lage und die Fehler Trotzki's* (30.12.1920), **Werke**, Bd.32, S.1-26; *Die Krise der Partei* (20.1.1921), **Werke**, Bd.32, S.27-38; *II. Gesamtrussischer Verbandstag der Bergarbeiter* (23.1.1921), **Werke**, Bd.32, S.39-55; *Noch einmal über die Gewerkschaften* (25.1.1921), **Werke**, Bd.32, S.99; *Ursprünglicher Entwurf der Resolution des X. Parteitages der KPR über die syndikalistische Abweichung in unserer Partei*, Bd.32, S.251.

8. T.W. Sapronow (1887-1939). Seit 1910 Bolschewik, leitete die Oppositionsgruppe „Demokratische

Zentralisten“ (1919-1910), Unterzeichner der oppositionellen *Erklärung der 46* (1923), führendes Mitglied der Linken Opposition, 1927 Ausschluß aus der Partei, 1928 verbannt. – *Wladimir Smirnow* seit 1904 Bolschewik, trat auf dem VIII. Parteitag 1919 als Sprecher der „Militäropposition“ auf, war 1919-1920 Mitglied der Gruppe „Demokratische Zentralisten“, Unterzeichner der *Erklärung der 46* (1923), wurde 1927 mit der linken Opposition aus der Partei ausgeschlossen. – Die Gruppe „Demokratische Zentralisten“, wurde 1919 auf dem linken Flügel der Partei gebildet. Sie opponierte gegen bürokratische Exzesse der Parteiführung.

Zu dieser Gruppe gehörten außer T.W. Saprnow und W. Smirnow u.a. N. Osinskij, V.N. Maksimovskij, A.S. Bubnow, M.A. Rafail, M.S. Boguslavskij und K.K. Jurenev, im wesentlichen Angehörige der Parteiintelligenz, wobei die fünf Erstgenannten bereits unter den „linken Kommunisten“ des Jahres 1918 gewesen waren. Die Gruppe trat für einen extremen Dezentralismus ein, sie wurde auf dem 11. Parteitag der RKP 1920 verurteilt. Osinskij, T.W. Saprnow, W.I. Smirnow, V.N. Maksimovskij, A. Bubnow u.a. zählten 1923 zu den Mitunterzeichnern der *Erklärung der Sechsendvierzig*. 1927 trat die Gruppe um Saprnow und W.M. Smirnov als „linke Opposition auf; ihre Plattform lag Korsch damals vor: **Vor dem Thermidor. Revolution und Konterrevolution in Sowjetrußland. Die Plattform der linken Opposition in der bolschewistischen Partei** (Saprnow, Smirnow, Oborin, Kahn usw.) Hrsgg. von den aus der Kommunistischen Partei ausgeschlossenen Hamburger Oktoberkämpfern, Hamburg 1927.



9. A.G. Schljapnikow (1885-1937). 1920 Führer der Arbeiteropposition mit A. Kollontai und Medwedew. Vertrat in der „Gewerkschaftsdiskussion“ die These von der autonomen Leitung der Industrie durch die Gewerkschaften, kritisierte 1921 die NEP als „arbeiterfeindlich“. Kapitulierte 1926. 1933 wurde S. aus der Partei ausgeschlossen und 1937 Opfer stalinistischer „Säuberungen“.

10. Gemeint ist die *Erklärung der Sechsendvierzig. An das Politbüro des Zentralkomitees der RKP* (15.10.1923), in: **Arbeiterdemokratie oder Parteidiktatur?**, Olten/Freiburg 1967, S.173-280. Zur Frage der Zusammenarbeit Trotzki mit dieser Gruppe und ihrer gemeinsamen Niederlage vgl. die Darstellung von Isaak Deutscher, **Trotzki**, Bd.2, **Der unbewaffnete Prophet 1921-1929**, Stuttgart 1962, S.117ff. – G.I. Mjasnikow, der Arbeiteropposition nahestehend, befolgte das Prinzip der Toleranz gegenüber Nichtkommunisten. 1922 als prominentes Mitglied aus der Partei ausgeschlossen. Führer der „Arbeitergruppe“.

11. Trotzki und Sinowjew unterbreiteten am 4. Oktober 1926 dem Politbüro den Vorschlag eines Waffenstillstandes. Stalin zog die Ausschlußdrohung zurück, diktierte allerdings die Bedingungen.

## LA CRISE DU MARXISME (1931)

KARL KORSCH

I.

Le marxisme en tant que mouvement et en tant que théorie traverse présentement une *crise*. Il ne s'agit plus d'une crise à l'intérieur du marxisme, mais d'une *crise du marxisme* lui-même.

*Extérieurement*, la crise réside dans l'effondrement total de cette position dominante à laquelle le marxisme s'était élevé, mi-réellement, mi-illusoirement, dans l'ensemble du mouvement ouvrier de la période avant-guerre. *Intérieurement*, elle consiste en une modification de la théorie et de la pratique marxistes elles-mêmes, modification que les marxistes ont étalée au grand jour en changeant de position vis-à-vis de leur propre État et du système d'État bourgeois en général.

Se borner à constater que la théorie révolutionnaire de Marx et Engels s'est abâtardie aux mains d'épigones et a été en partie abandonnées et croire qu'à ce marxisme appauvri et falsifié s'oppose la "doctrine pure" du marxisme de Marx-Engels, c'est une façon superficielle et erronée de concevoir l'essence théorique de la crise actuelle. En dernière analyse, il s'agit, dans la crise contemporaine du marxisme, bien davantage d'une crise de la théorie de Marx et Engels elle-même. La séparation idéologique et dogmatique de la " doctrine pure " d'avec le mouvement historique réel, jusque et y compris la poursuite du développement théorique, est elle-même une forme sous laquelle se manifeste cette crise.

## II.

La forme historique du marxisme qui est entrée de nos jours dans la phase critique de son développement nous vient de la seconde moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle : dans les pays d'Europe, où le capitalisme ne s'était pas encore pleinement développé, le mouvement ouvrier a *conservé* des éléments déterminés d'une théorie issue de tout autres conditions historiques.

C'est sur cette genèse historique du marxisme actuel que repose la séparation de la théorie et de la pratique qui lui est inhérente depuis le début. La théorie n'est pas au départ l'expression générale des luttes de classes existantes. Elle est plutôt le résultat concentré des luttes de classes d'une époque antérieure, sans aucune relation directe avec les luttes de classes contemporaines qui sont en train de réapparaître dans des conditions totalement transformées.

Cette séparation de la théorie et de la pratique qui s'est instaurée au départ ne s'est pas affaiblie dans le cours du développement, elle n'a fait au contraire que s'y renforcer.

Cette base constitue le support de trois phénomènes caractéristiques : le "révisionnisme " orthodoxie et les efforts qui visent de temps à autre à "ressusciter" la forme pure du marxisme révolutionnaire originel. En dernier ressort, c'est sur elle également que repose la crise du marxisme, telle qu'elle s'exprime à notre époque.

## III.

La théorie marxiste n'a pas pu continuer après 1850 à se développer de façon vivante dans la pratique du mouvement ouvrier parce que les *conditions historiques*

*transformées de la nouvelle époque du capitalisme et du mouvement de la classe ouvrière l'en ont empêchée.*

*Avec l'année 1850 s'achève le premier grand cycle historique du développement capitaliste. Au cours de celui-ci, le capitalisme a déjà parcouru sur sa base limitée d'alors toutes les phases de son développement jusqu'au point où la partie consciente du prolétariat put mettre à l'ordre du jour la révolution sociale de la classe ouvrière elle-même. Par conséquent, le mouvement de classe du prolétariat de l'époque a déjà atteint — sur cette base limitée — un assez haut degré de développement : les luttes révolutionnaires qu'ont alors menées des fractions isolées de la classe ouvrière en ont été l'expression pratique; ceux qu'on a appelés les "socialistes utopiques", en formulant à l'époque le premier contenu de la conscience de classe prolétarienne, en ont donné l'expression théorique.*

À cette époque et sur la foi des enseignements capitaux qu'ils en ont tirés pour poursuivre l'élaboration de leur théorie, Marx et Engels ont opéré une *double critique*. D'une part, ils ont critiqué l'ensemble des phénomènes de la société capitaliste existante (base économique et superstructure) du nouveau point de vue de la classe prolétarienne; ce faisant, ils ont repris sans le modifier le *contenu* de cette nouvelle conscience de classe prolétarienne, telle que la réalité immédiate des luttes de classes existantes et les formulations des socialistes utopiques l'avaient dégagé. D'autre part, ils ont critiqué à la fois le mouvement prolétarien pratique de leur époque et les théories du socialisme utopique, et cela par l'annexion des meilleurs résultats de la science bourgeoise d'alors : en amenant la classe prolétarienne à concevoir *les lois réelles du mouvement et du*

*développement de la société capitaliste en place, et par-là même les conditions réelles de l'action de classe révolutionnaire du prolétariat.*

Passé l'année 1850, le capitalisme entame sur une *base élargie* (du point de vue géographique, technique et de l'organisation) un *nouveau cycle historique* de son développement. Dans ces conditions, il était impossible au prolétariat de *se rattacher directement* à la forme révolutionnaire de la théorie originelle de Marx, issue des conditions de l'époque précédente. Le mouvement ouvrier put préserver formellement cette théorie à la faveur du développement d'une conscience de classe révolutionnaire dans les conditions créées par la *période de crise et de dépression des années 1870*. Mais il ne pouvait pas, ni en théorie ni en pratique, s'approprier pleinement le contenu révolutionnaire de cette théorie.

#### IV.

La théorie marxiste que le mouvement ouvrier européen a préservée dans la seconde moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, avait déjà à plus d'un égard perdu le caractère directement révolutionnaire qu'elle avait à l'origine.

*La conception matérialiste de l'histoire est apparue dans la période révolutionnaire de 1850 comme élément direct de l'action subjective de la classe révolutionnaire aux prises avec la critique théorique et le bouleversement pratique auxquels étaient soumis la fausse apparence et le phénomène éphémère rapports sociaux existants. Par la suite, elle s'est toujours plus acheminée dans le sens d'une histoire intuitive qui a réduit abstraitement le développement social à un cours objectif défini par des lois extérieures.*

À l'origine, *l'économie marxiste* était posée comme une *critique* radicale de l'économie politique de la classe bourgeoise qui devait trouver sa conclusion à la fois théorique et pratique dans une véritable révolution. Ce projet primitif subit plus tard des modifications de la part de Marx et plus encore d'Engels. *Par économie marxiste*, aussi bien les apologistes que les critiques du marxisme n'entendent plus d'ordinaire aujourd'hui qu'une tentative pour faire dériver théoriquement du concept axiomatique fondamental de « valeur », admis sans critique, tous les phénomènes économiques donnés dans la société bourgeoise, tentative dont la conclusion est l'achèvement d'un s'estime *scientifique*. Le *fétiche* que Marx voulait abolir et contre lequel il avait dirigé sa *critique* révolutionnaire *de l'économie politique* est devenu l'idole des économistes marxistes scientifiques et un objet de scandale pour les critiques bourgeois et réformistes de Marx.

## V.

Après la mort de Marx et d'Engels et de la première génération marxiste qu'ils avaient directement influencée, la science marxiste préservée par le mouvement ouvrier moderne ne l'a été qu'en tant qu'idéologie et a totalement cessé de se développer de manière vivante. Les meilleurs tenants du principe révolutionnaire dans les partis marxistes, qui eurent à mener à cette époque une violente lutte défensive entre la théorie et la pratique réformistes qui gagnaient en nombre, ne surent que s'opposer avec hostilité à tout ce qui fut tenté pour redonner vie et expression à la lutte de classes du prolétariat, et inclinèrent à voir encore un moindre mal, comparé aux menaces de falsification que la bourgeoisie faisait penser sur la théorie marxiste, dans sa stagnation. Les impulsions qui ont troussé dans cette

période à la poursuite d'un développement vivant de la théorie des luttes de classes prolétariennes, ont été essentiellement le fait de trois tendances qui se sont plus ou moins sciemment opposées à la théorie marxiste orthodoxe : il s'agit du *réformisme syndical*, du *syndicalisme révolutionnaire* et du *bolchevisme léniniste*. Malgré leur grande diversité sur tout le reste, ces tendances ont ceci de commun qu'à la place du développement objectif et soumis aux lois du capitalisme, elles ont toutes trois visé à faire de l'action subjective de la classe ouvrière elle-même l'objet principal de la théorie socialiste. Dans cette mesure, elles apparaissent à l'époque comme des tendances progressistes au sein du développement de la classe ouvrière et comme les premiers précurseurs de la nouvelle praxis et de la nouvelle théorie de classe du prolétariat qui vont devoir se constituer à l'avenir sur une base nouvelle.

## VII.

Cette esquisse des causes et des conditions historiques dont la crise contemporaine du marxisme est issue et s'est développée, permet de dégager quelques indications qui aideront à définir dans quelle direction elle doit être surmontée.

Aucune des tendances actuelles ne représente une expression théorique suffisante des besoins pratiques qui demeurent en dépit de la lourde défaite qu'il a subie, ceux de la lutte de classes du prolétariat, lutte révolutionnaire dans ses moyens et dans ses buts.

Le prétendu "marxisme orthodoxe " moins que tout autre ! De toutes les manifestations du marxisme, celle-ci apparaît comme la plus nocive pour le mouvement

progressiste de la classe prolétarienne. Après avoir été figée pendant très longtemps en idéologie pure et s'être dans sa dernière phase même désagrégée en tant qu'idéologie (Kautsky), elle n'est plus qu'une entrave à la poursuite du développement de la théorie et de la praxis de la lutte de classes du prolétariat.

En revanche, on ne peut pas liquider simplement comme réactionnaires, même du point de vue du prolétariat révolutionnaire, les deux autres tendances dans lesquelles le mouvement marxiste d'avant-guerre se survit historiquement, le *socialisme d'État* des actuels partis sociaux-démocrates et *l'anti-impérialisme communiste*. Il s'agit plutôt là d'un rapport qui existe entre le mouvement du prolétariat révolutionnaire et les deux grands continuateurs du mouvement ouvrier marxiste d'avant-guerre et qui correspond assez exactement aujourd'hui à la position qu'a pu adopter l'ensemble du mouvement de la classe prolétarienne vis-à-vis de la théorie et de la pratique du parti progressiste bourgeois radical à une époque où le mouvement de classe bourgeois avait encore en Europe un caractère progressiste bien délimité.

C'est un fait historique, qui paraît s'être accompli de manière irrévocable, que dans la période qui a précédé et suivi la guerre mondiale l'ancienne idéologie révolutionnaire et anti-étatique du marxisme social-démocrate s'est renversée en un socialisme d'État réformiste dans les *métropoles* dominantes du *système capitaliste mondial*, les pays dits impérialistes — à la manière dont le christianisme révolutionnaire et hostile au pouvoir central s'est métamorphosé au début du Moyen Âge en religion officielle de l'Empire romain.



D'autre part, dans les grands *territoires en marge du système capitaliste mondial*, qui ne sont pas encore parvenus à un développement indépendant du capitalisme, la forme d'expression théorique que les classes opprimées et exploitées cherchent à adapter à leurs luttes dans la période actuelle, semble se constituer présentement en liaison avec le prétendu communisme. Elle ne peut se rattacher au vieux marxisme, puisque celui-ci prend pour base un rapport positif direct qui existe entre la révolution bourgeoise et la révolution prolétarienne, entre la victoire du capitalisme sur les formes d'économie et de société précapitalistes et la lutte de classes prolétarienne, et qu'ici le rapport de la lutte de classes du prolétariat aux luttes de la bourgeoisie indigène et étrangère s'ordonne tout autrement, non pas certes en principe, mais tel qu'il apparaît dans ses manifestations immédiates. Ils ne peuvent à coup sûr pas se rattacher au réformisme qui est de nos jours indissociablement lié à l'expansion et à la politique coloniale des métropoles du système capitaliste mondial. Ils trouvent par contre dans le bolchevisme léniniste et le communisme une forme d'idéologie marxiste dont ils peuvent adopter le caractère anti-impérialiste explicite comme idéologie provisoire de leur propre lutte de classes anti-impérialiste : il s'agit là d'un mécanisme qu'on peut de nouveau comparer à l'extension du christianisme parmi les barbares au-delà des frontières de l'Empire.

### VIII.

Le marxisme en tant que phénomène historique qui a commencé par emprunter ses traits fondamentaux aux luttes de classes révolutionnaires de la première moitié du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, et s'est ensuite maintenu et changé dans la seconde moitié du siècle tout en devenant l'idéologie

révolutionnaire d'un mouvement prolétarien qui, selon sa véritable essence, n'était plus révolutionnaire, est aujourd'hui une réalité du passé. Néanmoins, la nouvelle théorie de la révolution prolétarienne qui va émerger dans la période qui s'annonce, sera une continuation historique du marxisme dans un sens historique plus profond. La lutte des classes du prolétariat est à jamais redevable à Marx et à Engels de la première récapitulation grandiose des idées prolétariennes qu'ils ont donnée à l'époque des débuts de son développement révolutionnaire et qui reste la *forme classique de la nouvelle conscience révolutionnaire de la classe ouvrière en lutte pour sa libération.*

# L'IDÉOLOGIE MARXISTE EN RUSSIE

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*«Le communisme n'est pour nous ni un état qui doit être créé, ni un idéal sur lequel la réalité devra se régler. Nous appelons communisme le mouvement réel qui supprime les conditions existantes (1).» MARX*

Nous abordons ici l'un des exemples les plus typiques du décalage frappant qui, sous une forme ou sous une autre, s'observe dans toutes les phases du développement historique du marxisme. On peut le définir comme la contradiction entre l'idéologie marxiste et le mouvement historique réel qui, à une époque donnée, se cache derrière cette façade idéologique.

Il y a maintenant presque un siècle, un censeur fut spécialement délégué par Berlin pour se substituer aux autorités locales de Cologne dans la délicate mission de bâillonner le journal « ultra-démocratique » publié par un jeune homme de vingt-quatre ans, nommé Karl Marx. Ce censeur rapporta au gouvernement prussien qu'on pouvait désormais en toute tranquillité autoriser la *Rheinische Zeitung* à reparaître, étant donné que « l'éminence grise de toute l'affaire, le docteur Marx » avait définitivement quitté son travail, et qu'il n'existait aucun successeur capable de maintenir le ton « d'insupportable arrogance » adopté par le journal ou de poursuivre sa politique avec la même détermination. Toutefois, ce conseil ne fut pas suivi par les autorités

prussiennes, soumises en ce domaine, ainsi qu'il a été prouvé plus tard, aux directives du tsar russe Nicolas I<sup>er</sup>. Son vice-chancelier, le comte de Nesselrode, venait précisément de menacer l'ambassadeur prussien à Moscou de révéler à sa Majesté Impériale « les attaques infamantes dont le Cabinet russe avait récemment fait l'objet dans la *Rheinische Zeitung* de Cologne ». Ceci se passait en Prusse en 1843.

Trois décades plus tard, la censure de la Russie tsariste autorisait la publication en Russie de l'ouvrage de Marx — *Le Capital* — dans sa première traduction. La décision était justifiée par cet argument inestimable : « Bien que les convictions politiques de l'auteur soient exclusivement socialistes, et que le livre tout entier soit clairement de nature socialiste, toutefois, sa conception n'en fait assurément pas un livre accessible à tous; de plus, son style est strictement mathématique et scientifique, aussi le comité déclare-t-il le livre exempt de toute poursuite. »

Ce régime tsariste, si prompt à censurer même la plus insignifiante insulte proférée dans un pays européen contre la suprématie russe, et, en même temps, si inconscient de la menace que représentait l'analyse scientifique faite par Marx du monde capitaliste, ne fut en réalité jamais ébranlé par les vigoureuses attaques que Marx lança ultérieurement contre « les vastes empiétements, jamais contrecarrés, de ce pouvoir barbare dont la tête est à Saint-Pétersbourg et les mains dans chaque cabinet d'Europe ». Et pourtant, il devait succomber à cette même menace, apparemment si lointaine, que ce cheval de Troie avait introduite au cœur du Saint-Empire. Le régime tsariste fut renversé finalement par la masse des ouvriers russes dont l'avant-

garde avait appris sa leçon révolutionnaire dans *Le Capital* — cet ouvrage « mathématique et scientifique » d'un penseur solitaire.

A l'inverse de l'Europe occidentale, où la théorie marxiste apparut à l'époque du déclin de la révolution bourgeoise et s'affirmait comme expression d'une tendance réelle visant au dépassement des objectifs du mouvement révolutionnaire bourgeois — la tendance représentée par la classe prolétarienne —, au contraire, en Russie, le marxisme ne fut dès le début que l'écran idéologique derrière lequel se cachait dans la pratique la lutte pour le développement capitaliste dans un pays précapitaliste. A cette fin, toute l'intelligentsia progressiste adopta avidement le marxisme comme le dernier mot d'ordre de l'Europe. Mais la société bourgeoise, qui avait atteint en Europe occidentale son plein développement, n'en était encore ici qu'aux premières douleurs de son enfantement. Et pourtant, même sur ce terrain vierge, le principe bourgeois ne pouvait plus reprendre les illusions et les auto-illusions, désormais périmées, grâce auxquelles il s'était masqué le contenu strictement bourgeois de ses luttes à l'époque héroïque de son premier développement en Occident, et qui lui avaient permis de maintenir ses passions au niveau de grands événements historiques. Pour pénétrer à l'Est, il lui fallait faire peau neuve idéologiquement. Et la doctrine marxiste, empruntée à l'Ouest, semblait précisément la plus apte à rendre cet important service au développement bourgeois en Russie. A cet égard, le marxisme était de très loin supérieur à la doctrine russe des révolutionnaires narodniki (populistes). Tandis que ces derniers partaient du principe que le capitalisme, tel qu'il existait dans les pays « païens » de l'Ouest, était inconcevable en Russie, le marxisme, en raison même de

son origine historique, présupposait l'accomplissement de la civilisation capitaliste comme une étape historique indispensable dans le processus qui aboutirait à une société véritablement socialiste. Et pourtant, avant de pouvoir rendre à la société bourgeoise russe de tels services idéologiques, la doctrine marxiste nécessitait quelques- modifications, même dans son contenu purement théorique. Voilà la raison fondamentale des concessions théoriques énormes, autrement inexplicables, faites dans les années 70 et 80 par Marx et Engels aux idées soutenues alors par les populistes russes, dont la doctrine était essentiellement irréconciliable avec leur propre théorie. L'expression finale la plus complète de ces concessions se trouve dans la fameuse déclaration de l'avant-propos à la traduction russe du *Manifeste Communiste* (1882) :

« Le *Manifeste Communiste* avait pour tâche de proclamer la disparition inévitable et imminente de la propriété bourgeoise moderne. En Russie cependant, à côté du bluff capitaliste en plein épanouissement, et de la propriété foncière bourgeoise, en voie de développement, nous voyons que plus de la moitié du sol est la propriété commune des paysans. Dès lors, la question se pose : l'obchtchina russe, forme de l'archaïque propriété commune du sol, pourra-t-elle, alors qu'elle est déjà fortement ébranlée, passer directement à la forme supérieure, à la forme communiste de la propriété collective? ou bien devra-t-elle, au contraire, parcourir auparavant le même processus de dissolution qui caractérise le développement historique de l'Occident?

« Voici la seule réponse que l'on puisse faire présentement à cette question : si la révolution russe

donne le signal d'une révolution prolétarienne en Occident, et que toutes deux se complètent, l'actuelle propriété collective de Russie pourra servir comme point de départ pour une évolution communiste (2). »

Dans ces phrases, comme dans beaucoup d'autres déclarations semblables qui figurent dans la correspondance de Marx-Engels — dans les lettres à l'écrivain populiste russe Nikolai-on (3), dans la lettre à Véra Zassoulitch (4) et dans la réponse de Marx à l'interprétation fataliste tirée par le critique russe Mikhaïlovski (5) de sa théorie des étapes historiques nécessaires —, on peut lire par anticipation toute l'évolution ultérieure du marxisme russe, et donc aussi voir se creuser toujours davantage le fossé entre son idéologie et le contenu réel du mouvement. Il est vrai que pour Marx et Engels, le passage direct d'un stade semi-patriarcal et féodal à une société socialiste supposait — c'était une réserve prudente — une révolution ouvrière à l'Ouest, condition nécessaire pour qu'émergent les tendances socialistes virtuelles d'une société pré-capitaliste. La même réserve fut reprise plus tard par Lénine. Il est vrai aussi que cette condition ne fut jamais remplie (ni à l'époque, ni après 1917) et qu'au contraire, la communauté paysanne russe à qui Marx, aussi tard que 1882, avait dévolu un rôle futur si considérable, fut peu après complètement éliminée.(6)

Pourtant, même des slogans apparemment aussi anti-marxistes que celui de la récente « théorie » stalinienne sur la construction du socialisme dans un seul pays, utilisant le marxisme comme couverture idéologique d'une évolution dont la nature réelle est capitaliste, peuvent indéniablement se référer, non seulement au précédent créé par le marxiste orthodoxe Lénine, mais

même à Marx et Engels en personnes. Eux aussi étaient tout disposés, dans certaines conditions historiques, à remodeler leur théorie « marxiste » critico-matérialiste en simple ornement idéologique d'un mouvement révolutionnaire qui, s'il se proclamait socialiste dans ses fins ultimes, était dans son processus réel inévitablement soumis à toutes sortes de limitations bourgeoises. La seule différence, et elle est de taille, c'est que Marx, Engels et Lénine agissaient ainsi afin d'impulser le futur mouvement révolutionnaire, tandis que Staline utilise exclusivement l'idéologie «marxiste » comme moyen pour défendre un statu-quo non socialiste et comme arme contre toute tendance révolutionnaire.

Et ainsi s'amorça, du vivant même de Marx et Engels et avec leur collaboration active et consciente, ce renversement de fonction spécifique par lequel le marxisme, adopté comme une doctrine toute faite par les révolutionnaires russes, cessa d'être l'outil théorique d'une révolution socialiste prolétarienne pour devenir ultérieurement le simple déguisement idéologique d'une évolution capitaliste bourgeoise. Comme nous l'avons vu, ce renversement de fonction présupposait au départ une certaine transformation de la doctrine elle-même, qui dans ce cas fut réalisée par la fusion et l'interpénétration de la doctrine populiste traditionnelle et d'éléments idéologiques Marxistes nouvellement adoptés. Cette transformation de leur théorie, admise à l'origine par Marx et Engels uniquement comme une étape transitoire, que surmonterait l'imminente « révolution ouvrière à l'Ouest », s'avéra bientôt n'avoir été que le premier pas vers la transformation définitive de leur théorie marxiste révolutionnaire en un simple mythe révolutionnaire. Lequel, s'il pouvait tout au plus servir de stimulant dans les premiers stades d'une révolution naissante, devait



inévitablement aboutir à freiner le développement réel de la révolution, au lieu de l'accélérer.

Il est intéressant d'observer comment ce processus d'adaptation idéologique de la doctrine marxiste s'est déroulé au cours des décades suivantes dans le cadre des diverses écoles de révolutionnaires russes. Si l'on étudie de près les violentes controverses sur la perspective d'un développement capitaliste en Russie, qui animèrent les cercles confidentiels des marxistes russes en exil et en Russie, des années 90 jusqu'à la guerre, et au renversement du gouvernement tsariste en 1917, — controverses dont l'expression théorique la plus achevée se trouve dans le principal ouvrage économique de Lénine *Le Développement du capitalisme en Russie* (1899) (7) — on peut, à la lumière de cette étude, affirmer sans exagérer que le contenu réel de la théorie marxiste originelle, en tant qu'expression théorique d'un mouvement prolétarien autonome et strictement socialiste, avait disparu du débat.

Cela est indiscutablement vrai des soi-disant « marxistes légaux » qui, dans leur exposé « scientifique » de l'aspect objectif de la doctrine marxiste, se vantaient de maintenir une « pureté » particulièrement inaltérée, mais qui compensaient largement cette rigidité doctrinale en renonçant à toute application pratique des principes marxistes susceptible de dépasser des objectifs strictement bourgeois. La théorie révolutionnaire marxiste dans son ensemble n'était pas davantage représentée par ces autres courants qui, à l'époque, cherchaient à combiner, sous une forme ou sous une autre, la nécessité d'une étape transitoire de développement capitaliste en Russie avec le combat anticipé contre les conditions sociales futures que ce

développement devait créer. A ce courant, appartient l'écrivain populiste érudit déjà mentionné, Nikolai-on, traducteur russe *du Capital*, qui au début des années 90, sous l'influence directe de la doctrine marxiste, abandonna la conviction populiste orthodoxe concernant *l'impossibilité absolue du capitalisme en Russie* pour adopter la théorie, inspirée du marxisme, de *l'impossibilité d'un développement capitaliste organique normal en Russie*. A ce courant, appartient également l'adversaire matérialiste véhément de l'idéalisme populiste, le marxiste orthodoxe Lénine, et ses partisans, qui, ultérieurement, après leur rupture avec les «mencheviks» occidentalisés, se proclamèrent les seuls héritiers authentiques, dans la théorie comme dans la pratique, de l'intégralité du contenu révolutionnaire de la théorie marxiste, tel que le restituait la doctrine du marxisme bolchevique.

Quand nous analysons rétrospectivement les ardentes controverses théoriques de cette période, nous constatons un rapport manifeste entre, d'une part, la théorie populiste de « l'impossibilité d'un développement capitaliste organique normal en Russie » (défendue par le narodnik marxiste Nikolai-on et combattue à l'époque par les marxistes de tous bords, les « légaux » et les «révolutionnaires», les mencheviks et les bolcheviks) et, d'autre part, les deux théories rivales : « stalinisme » au pouvoir et «trotskysme» d'opposition, qui, dans une phase récente de l'évolution russe, se sont affrontées. Assez paradoxalement, la théorie « national-socialiste » stalinienne dominante sur la possibilité de construire le socialisme dans un seul pays, tout comme la thèse « internationaliste », en apparence diamétralement opposée, élaborée par Trotsky concernant l'inévitabilité de la révolution « permanente » — c'est-à-dire d'une

révolution dépassant les objectifs révolutionnaires bourgeois simultanément à l'échelon russe et européen (ou mondial) — ces thèses reposent, toutes deux sur la base idéologique commune de la croyance néo-narodnik en l'absence ou l'impossibilité d'un développement capitaliste « normal et organique » en Russie.

Trotsky et Staline fondent leurs versions respectives de l'idéologie marxiste sur l'autorité de Lénine. Effectivement même le plus orthodoxe d'entre les marxistes orthodoxes qui, avant Octobre 1917, avait combattu âprement à la fois le populisme de Nikolai-on et la théorie de Parvus-Trotsky sur la « révolution permanente », qui, après Octobre, s'était opposé avec la même cohérence au courant général glorifiant les réalisations dérisoires de ce qu'on appela plus tard le « communisme de guerre » des années 1918-1920 — Lénine — abandonna à la fin cette lutte sans répit en faveur du réalisme critico-révolutionnaire pour soutenir, à l'encontre des conditions objectives réelles, le concept néo-populiste d'un socialisme russe maison. Ceux-là mêmes qui avaient combattu la tendance première à l'idéalisation socialiste et qui, lors de la proclamation de la *Nep* en 1921, avaient encore déclaré sobrement que « cette nouvelle politique économique de l'État ouvrier et paysan » était une régression nécessaire par rapport aux tentatives plus avancées du communisme de guerre, ceux-là mêmes découvrirent en quelques semaines la nature socialiste du capitalisme d'État et d'une économie qui restait essentiellement bourgeoise, en dépit d'une légère teinte coopérative. Ainsi, ce ne fut pas l'épigone léniniste Staline, mais bien le marxiste orthodoxe Lénine qui, au moment historique crucial où les tendances pratiques de la révolution russe, jusque-là indécises, se trouvèrent orientées et « pour de bon et pour longtemps »

vers la restauration d'une économie non socialiste ajouta alors à cette restriction finale des buts pratiques de la révolution ce qu'il estimait être un complément idéologique indispensable. Ce fut le marxiste orthodoxe Lénine qui, en contradiction avec toutes ses déclarations antérieures, créa le premier le nouveau mythe marxiste d'un socialisme inhérent à l'État soviétique et, en conséquence, de la possibilité ainsi garantie de réaliser intégralement la société socialiste dans la Russie soviétique isolée.

Cette dégénérescence de la doctrine marxienne, qui en fait sa simple justification idéologique que d'un État en réalité capitaliste et donc, inévitablement, d'un État basé sur la suppression du mouvement révolutionnaire du prolétariat, clôt la première période de l'histoire de l'idéologie marxiste en Russie. Seule période, d'ailleurs, où l'évolution du marxisme en Russie semble présenter un caractère d'autonomie. Toutefois, il faut signaler que d'un point de vue plus global, en dépit des apparences et des nombreuses différences résultant des conditions spécifiques à chaque pays, l'évolution historique du marxisme russe (y compris ses dernières étapes léniniste et staliniste), est fondamentalement semblable à celle du marxisme dit « occidental » (ou social-démocrate), dont il a été, et reste toujours, partie intégrante. La Russie ne fut jamais cette nation sainte et exceptionnelle dont rêvaient les panslavistes, tout comme le bolchevisme ne fut jamais, ainsi que le prétendaient les marxistes soi-disant raffinés d'Angleterre, de France et d'Allemagne, une version grossière d'un marxisme adapté aux conditions primitives du régime tsariste. De la même façon, l'actuelle dégénérescence bourgeoise du marxisme en Russie est fondamentalement semblable à la dégénérescence qui affecta progressivement les divers

courants du marxisme « occidental » pendant la guerre, l'après-guerre et surtout après l'élimination finale de tous les bastions marxistes au cours de l'avènement triomphant du fascisme et du nazisme. Le « national-socialisme » de Herr Hitler et « l'État corporatif » de Mussolini rivalisent avec le « marxisme » de Staline pour endoctriner les cerveaux de leurs ouvriers au moyen d'une idéologie pseudo-socialiste, non contents d'avoir la mainmise sur leur existence physique et sociale. De la même façon, le régime « démocratique » d'un gouvernement de Front Populaire présidé par le « marxiste » Léon Blum ou, aussi bien, par M. Chautemps en personne, ne diffère pas essentiellement de l'actuel État soviétique, sinon par une utilisation moins efficace de l'idéologie marxiste.

Moins que jamais, le marxisme sert aujourd'hui d'arme théorique dans une lutte autonome du prolétariat, pour et par le prolétariat. Tous les soi-disant partis « marxistes » sont maintenant engagés très avant, tant dans leur théorie que dans leur pratique réelles sur la voie de la collaboration. Réduits au rôle de sous-fifres des dirigeants bourgeois, ils ne peuvent qu'aider modestement à résoudre ce que le « marxiste » américain L. B. Boudin définissait encore récemment comme « le plus grand problème du marxisme — notre position par rapport aux luttes internes de la société capitaliste ».

[Rédigé par Karl Korsch sous le pseudonyme l.h.]

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### Notes

(1) *L'Idéologie allemande*, in Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, *Œuvres III*, "Philosophie".

- (2) Karl MARX, *Œuvres*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, t. 1, p. 1483.
- (3) in "Lettres sur le *Capital*", Éditions sociales, Paris, 1964. Nikolai-on est le pseudonyme de Nikolaï Danielson (1844-1918), traducteur du *Capital* en langue russe
- (4) Karl MARX, *Œuvres*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, t.2, p.1557et sq. Cette lettre date de 1881.
- (5) Id., p. 1552.
- (6) On verra Engels prendre acte de cet échec dans ses lettres à Danielson, écrites au début des années 90. In "Lettres sur le Capital", op. cit. et "Écrits sur le tsarisme et la Commune russe". *Cahiers de L'I.S.E.A.*, n° 7,juillet 1969.
- (7) "Le Développement du capitalisme en Russie", *Œuvres complètes de Lénine*, Éditions du Progrès, Moscou, t. III.

## LA PHILOSOPHIE DE LÉNINE

KARL KORSCH

(Remarques sur la récente critique faite par J. Harper (Pannekoek) du livre de Lénine *Matérialisme et empiriocriticisme*.) [1938]

Lénine à la conquête de l'Ouest

Quelle différence frappante entre l'impression que firent sur les révolutionnaires d'Europe de l'Ouest les courtes brochures de Lénine et de Trotsky, traduites et imprimées à la diable dans la dernière période de la guerre ou dans l'immédiat après-guerre, et l'effet, tant en Europe qu'aux Etats-Unis, des premières versions de l'ouvrage philosophique de Lénine *Matérialisme et empiriocriticisme*, publié en russe en 1908 et tardivement (1927) en d'autres langues !

Les premières, par exemple *l'Etat et la révolution (la Doctrine marxiste de l'Etat et les tâches du prolétariat dans la révolution)* ou les *Tâches immédiates du pouvoir des soviets*, avaient été étudiées avec avidité par les révolutionnaires européens. Ils y voyaient les premiers témoignages dignes de foi sur une révolution prolétarienne victorieuse et, du même coup, des guides pratiques pour les soulèvements révolutionnaires imminents où ils seraient engagés. Ces ouvrages étaient simultanément ignorés, falsifiés, calomniés, méprisés et également terriblement craints par la bourgeoisie et par ses partisans au sein du camp marxiste, c'est-à-dire les réformistes et les centristes à la Kautsky.

Lorsque parut hors de Russie l'ouvrage de Lénine, le décor avait bien changé. Lénine était mort. La Russie des Soviets s'était progressivement transformée en un nouvel Etat qui tenait sa partie dans la concurrence et la lutte entre les divers "blocs" de puissances formés dans une Europe apparemment vite remise de la guerre et d'une crise économique profonde mais passagère. Le marxisme avait cédé la place au léninisme, puis plus tard au stalinisme, ce dernier n'étant même plus considéré au premier chef comme une théorie de la lutte de classe prolétarienne, mais comme la philosophie dominante d'un Etat, différente sans doute mais pas entièrement de ces autres philosophies d'Etat que sont le fascisme italien ou la démocratie américaine. Même les derniers vestiges de l'agitation "prolétarienne" avaient disparu avec l'écrasement de la grève générale en Angleterre et de celle des mineurs de 1926, et avec la fin sanglante de la première période de la révolution chinoise, celle que l'on qualifie de "communiste". L'intelligentsia européenne était donc mûre pour accueillir avec les premiers écrits philosophiques de Marx (hier encore inconnus, aujourd'hui luxueusement édités par l'institut Marx-Engels-Lénine de Moscou), les révélations philosophiques également piquantes du grand "disciple" russe qui, après tout, venait de renverser l'empire tsariste et avait su maintenir jusqu'à sa mort une dictature incontestée.

Mais les couches du prolétariat de l'Europe occidentale qui avaient fourni ces premiers lecteurs, les plus sérieux et les plus persévérants, des brochures révolutionnaires de Lénine, écrites de 1917 à 1920, semblaient avoir disparu. Le devant de la scène était occupé par ces carriéristes staliniens, s'accommodant à tout et de tout, seule composante stable des partis communistes non



russe d'aujourd'hui; ou encore comme le montre de manière typique l'évolution récente du parti communiste anglais, par des membres progressistes de la classe dominante elle-même ou des partisans de cette classe recrutés tout naturellement au sein des couches les plus cultivées et les plus aisées de la vieille et de la nouvelle intelligentsia, et qui ont fini par pratiquement remplacer, au sein du parti, les éléments prolétariens d'autrefois. Le communisme prolétarien ne semble survivre que grâce à des penseurs isolés ou dans de petits groupes, comme les communistes de conseils hollandais, d'où provient justement la brochure de Harper.

On aurait pu croire que le livre de Lénine, lorsqu'il fut mis à la disposition du public d'Europe occidentale et d'Amérique dans le but manifeste de diffuser ces principes philosophiques du marxisme qui sont à la base de l'Etat russe actuel et du parti communiste qui y règne, aurait reçu partout un accueil chaleureux. En fait il n'en fut rien. Sans aucun doute, la philosophie de Lénine, telle qu'elle ressort de son livre, est infiniment supérieure, même sur un plan purement théorique, à ce ramassis de miettes tombées de systèmes philosophico-sociologiques contre-révolutionnaires et dépassés, dont Mussolini, avec l'appui d'un ex-philosophe hégélien, Gentile, et de quelques autres aides de camp intellectuels, a prétendu faire une philosophie "fasciste". Elle est incomparablement supérieure à cette énorme masse de lieux communs et de camelote stupide que nous distille l'œuvre "théorique" d'Adolf Hitler en tant que *Weltanschauung* politico-philosophique. Ainsi ceux qui ont réussi à découvrir quelque nouveauté ou quelque profondeur dans les idées de Mussolini et qui arrivent à trouver un sens aux platitudes du Führer n'auraient dû avoir aucune difficulté à avaler ce fatras de contresens,

d'incompréhension, et d'arriération en général, qui ruine la valeur théorique de l'essai philosophique de Lénine. Pourtant les quelques personnes qui, aujourd'hui, connaissent les œuvres des philosophes et des savants dont Lénine parle, et qui sont au courant des développements de la science moderne, auraient dû pouvoir extraire de ce livre de 1908 — pour s'exprimer dans le style cher à Lénine — le "joyau" d'une pensée révolutionnaire conséquente "encore dans la gangue", d'une acceptation sans réserve de concepts "matérialistes" caducs, datant d'une époque historique révolue, et d'une interprétation abusive et aussi peu justifiée des tentatives les plus authentiques des savants modernes pour développer la théorie matérialiste. Quoi qu'il en soit, la réaction de l'intelligentsia bourgeoise progressiste dans son ensemble face à cette propagation tardive de la philosophie matérialiste de Lénine a dû quelque peu décevoir les Russes qui en maintes occasions ont montré qu'ils n'étaient pas insensibles aux louanges reçues pour leurs exercices favoris dans le domaine de la théorie, même si ces louanges proviennent de ces cercles " profanes " (du point de vue du marxisme) que sont les milieux scientifiques et philosophiques de l'Europe occidentale et de l'Amérique. Pas d'hostilité ouverte, mais l'indifférence. Plus gênant encore, chez ceux dont on souhaitait le plus les applaudissements, une sorte d'embarras poli.

Ce silence désagréable ne fut même pas troublé, du moins pendant longtemps, par une de ces attaques vigoureuses que la minorité marxiste révolutionnaire portait violemment contre Lénine et ses disciples lorsqu'ils tentaient de transformer les principes politiques et tactiques, appliqués avec succès par les bolcheviks dans la révolution russe, en règles

universellement valables pour la révolution prolétarienne mondiale. Les derniers représentants de cette tendance ont été très longs à déclencher une attaque d'envergure contre une tentative analogue, celle d'étendre à l'échelle mondiale les principes philosophiques de Lénine, promus au rang de seule doctrine philosophique véritable du marxisme révolutionnaire. Aujourd'hui, trente ans après la première publication (en russe) du livre de Lénine, onze ans après ses premières traductions en allemand et en anglais, paraît enfin le premier examen critique de cette contribution de Lénine à la philosophie matérialiste marxiste, examen dû à quelqu'un qui, sans doute aucun et pour de nombreuses raisons, est mieux qualifié pour cette tâche que n'importe quel marxiste contemporain (1). Mais il y a bien peu d'espoir que cette première et importante critique de la philosophie de Lénine puisse atteindre ne serait-ce que cette faible minorité de marxistes révolutionnaires à qui elle s'adresse plus particulièrement. Elle est signée d'un pseudonyme quasi impénétrable, et, signe hautement caractéristique, publiée sous forme ronéotypée.

Ainsi une longue période s'est écoulée avant que les deux camps de cette lutte mondiale, qui oppose les marxistes radicaux de l'Occident aux bolcheviks russes, aient découvert que leurs oppositions politiques, tactiques et organisationnelles provenaient en dernier ressort de principes plus profonds qui avaient été jusqu'alors négligés dans le feu du combat. Ces oppositions ne pouvaient être clarifiées sans un retour à ces principes philosophiques fondamentaux, ici encore semblait s'appliquer la phrase du vieil Hegel : "l'oiseau de Minerve ne prend son envol qu'à la tombée du jour". Cela ne veut pas dire que cette dernière "période philosophique" du mouvement social qui se déroule à

une époque déterminée soit du même coup la plus haute et la plus importante. La lutte philosophique des idées est, du point de vue prolétarien, non pas la base mais tout simplement une forme idéologique transitoire de la lutte de classe révolutionnaire qui détermine le développement historique de notre temps.

### Léninisme contre Machisme

Il est impossible de discuter dans un seul article les nombreux résultats très importants qu'apporte cet ouvrage magistral de Harper. Après un exposé bref et lumineux du développement historique du marxisme depuis l'époque de Marx et du matérialisme bourgeois des débuts, Harper expose de manière irréprochable le contenu théorique véritable de l'œuvre de Joseph Dietzgen d'une part et des savants bourgeois Mach et Avenarius d'autre part, qui tous tentèrent de taire mieux que leurs prédécesseurs en complétant leur représentation matérialiste du monde objectif par une représentation également matérialiste du processus même de la connaissance. Il montre de manière définitive quelles distorsions incroyables Lénine a fait subir aux théories de ces deux derniers auteurs, dans un exposé entièrement partial. En revanche, il n'existe pas, à la connaissance de l'auteur de ces lignes, de compte rendu aussi magistral du contenu scientifique essentiel de l'œuvre de Mach et d'Avenarius, que celui qui occupe les quelque vingt pages consacrées à ces savants dans la brochure. Il n'existe pas non plus de réfutation aussi pertinente et efficace des erreurs théoriques commises par Lénine et ses disciples lorsqu'ils critiquent naïvement des définitions modernes de concepts comme "matière", "énergie", "lois de la nature", "nécessité", "espace-temps", etc., du point de vue du "sens commun".

Ce prétendu sens commun n'est en fait le plus souvent qu'un réchauffé des théories physiques dépassées et, selon Engels, le "pire des métaphysiciens".

Mais ce n'est là qu'un des aspects de cette critique des idées de Lénine et peut-être pas le plus important. La principale faiblesse de l'attaque de Lénine contre le machisme n'est pas cette mauvaise foi générale, ces contresens flagrants, cette incompréhension de la tentative essentiellement matérialiste sous-jacente à la philosophie néopositiviste, cette ignorance des réels succès obtenus depuis l'époque de Marx et Engels dans le domaine de la physique moderne. La principale faiblesse de la critique "matérialiste", que fait Lénine de ce qu'il appelle une tendance idéaliste (solipsiste, mystique, et finalement entièrement religieuse et réactionnaire) qui se dissimulerait derrière les théories pseudo-matérialistes et scientifiques de Mach et de ses disciples, réside essentiellement dans sa propre incapacité à dépasser les limites intrinsèques du matérialisme bourgeois. Il a beau parler de la supériorité du matérialisme marxiste "moderne" sur la méthode philosophique abstraite et fondamentalement naturaliste des premiers matérialistes bourgeois, il ne voit finalement qu'une différence de degré et non de nature entre ces deux matérialismes. Au mieux décrit-il le "matérialisme moderne" créé par Marx et Engels comme un "matérialisme incomparablement plus riche en contenu et plus solidement fondé que tous les matérialismes qui l'ont précédé". Il ne voit jamais la différence entre le "matérialisme historique" de Marx et les formes "de matérialisme qui l'ont précédé" comme une opposition insurmontable issue d'un conflit de classe réel. Il la conçoit plutôt comme une expression plus ou moins radicale d'un mouvement révolutionnaire continu.

C'est pourquoi la critique "matérialiste" que Lénine fait de Mach et des machistes échoue, comme le montre Harper, même dans le domaine purement théorique, parce que Lénine attaquait les plus récents efforts du matérialisme naturaliste bourgeois, non du point de vue du matérialisme historique, lié à la classe prolétarienne entièrement développée, mais de celui d'une période antérieure du matérialisme bourgeois, d'une période de développement scientifique inférieur.

Cette appréciation de la philosophie matérialiste de Lénine est confirmée par les développements ultérieurs de celle-ci après 1908 et dont la brochure de Harper ne parle pas.

L'institut Marx-Engels-Lénine vient de publier des notes philosophiques de Lénine postérieures à 1913. On peut y trouver les premiers germes de l'importance particulière que devait prendre, dans la dernière période de la vie de Lénine et dans celle qui a suivi sa mort, la pensée philosophique de Hegel, du moins telle qu'elle est présentée dans la "philosophie matérialiste" de Lénine. On assiste à une renaissance de la dialectique idéaliste de Hegel, autrefois désavouée, mais qui tardivement sert à réconcilier l'adhésion des léninistes au vieux matérialisme bourgeois avec les exigences formelles d'une tendance en apparence anti-bourgeoise, révolutionnaire et prolétarienne. Tandis que dans les périodes précédentes le "matérialisme historique" était conçu, bien que de manière assez peu claire, comme "différent des formes antérieures du matérialisme", l'accent passait du matérialisme "historique" au matérialisme "dialectique" ou, plus exactement, comme le dit Lénine, dans sa dernière œuvre qu'il a consacrée à ce sujet, à une "application matérialiste de la dialectique

(idéaliste) de Hegel". Ainsi dans cette phase du mouvement marxiste où les Russes jouent un rôle, se trouve répétée toute l'évolution du matérialisme bourgeois (et même de toute la pensée philosophique bourgeoise d'Holbach à Hegel), puisque ce marxisme est passé du matérialisme du 18<sup>e</sup> siècle et de celui de Feuerbach, qui étaient adoptés par Plekhanov et Lénine avant la guerre, à une sympathie pour l' "idéalisme intelligent " de Hegel et des autres philosophes bourgeois du 19<sup>e</sup> siècle par opposition au "matérialisme inintelligent" des philosophes du début du siècle précédent. (2).

L'influence de la philosophie matérialiste de Lénine aujourd'hui

A la fin de son ouvrage Harper traite de la signification historique et pratique de la philosophie matérialiste de Lénine dont il avait discuté les aspects théoriques dans les chapitres précédents. Il admet sans réserves que des nécessités tactiques, valables dans les conditions prérévolutionnaires de la Russie tsariste, aient obligé Lénine à un combat inflexible contre les bolcheviks de gauche, comme Bogdanov, partisans plus ou moins avoués des idées de Mach et qui, en dépit de leurs bonnes intentions révolutionnaires, mettaient réellement en danger l'unité du parti marxiste et affaiblissaient son énergie révolutionnaire par une révision de son idéologie matérialiste " monolithique". Harper va un peu trop loin dans la sympathie qu'il porte à la tactique adoptée par Lénine en 1908 dans le domaine de la philosophie, plus loin en tout cas qu'il ne semble justifié à l'auteur de ces lignes, même dans une analyse rétrospective. S'il avait étudié les tendances représentées par les machistes russes et leurs maîtres allemands, Harper aurait été plus

circonspect dans son appréciation positive de l'attitude de Lénine dans le combat idéologique de 1908, ne serait-ce qu'en prenant connaissance d'un événement qui se déroula plus tard. Lorsque, après 1908, Lénine en eut fini avec l'opposition machiste au sein du comité central du parti bolchevik, il considéra l'incident comme clos. Dans la préface à la deuxième édition russe de son livre il signale qu'il n'a pas eu "la possibilité de prendre connaissance des dernières œuvres de Bogdanov" mais il était entièrement convaincu, d'après ce que d'autres lui en avaient dit, que "Bogdanov propage des idées bourgeoises et réactionnaires sous les apparences de "culture prolétarienne". Il ne livra pas pour autant Bogdanov à la G.P.U., aux fins d'exécution pour cet horrible crime. A cette époque pré-stalinienne, il s'estima satisfait d'une exécution spirituelle abandonnée à un excellent camarade du parti, digne de toutes les confiances. Ainsi apprenons-nous de la plume du léniniste fidèle V.I. Nevsky (dont Lénine a joint l'article à la deuxième édition de son livre) (3), que Bogdanov, non seulement a persévéré, sans faire preuve d'aucun remords, dans ses anciennes erreurs machistes, mais a même ajouté un crime supplémentaire encore plus flagrant : une omission. "Il est curieux ", dit Nevsky, que dans tous les écrits qu'il a publiés pendant la période de la dictature du prolétariat, que ce soit sur des sujets théoriques ou sur le problème de la culture prolétarienne, Bogdanov ne parle jamais de la "production et de son système d'organisation dans les conditions de la dictature du prolétariat pas plus qu'il ne dit mot de cette dictature elle-même". Ce fait prouve à l'évidence que Bogdanov ne s'est pas amendé et qu'en fait cet "idéaliste", qui pêche contre les principes fondamentaux de la philosophie de Lénine et de ses disciples, ne saurait s'amender. Il ne faudrait pas en conclure que l'auteur de



ces lignes considère que les définitions de Bogdanov (par exemple: le monde physique est " l'expérience organisée socialement ", la matière "n'est rien d'autre que la résistance aux efforts du travail collectif ", la nature est "le déroulement d'un panorama, celui de l'expérience du travail", etc.) apportent la solution réellement matérialiste et prolétarienne au problème posé par Marx dans les "Thèses sur Feuerbach" :

*"Le défaut principal de tout matérialisme connu jusqu'ici — y compris celui de Feuerbach — est que la réalité concrète et sensible n'y est conçue que sous la forme de l'objet ou de la représentation, mais non comme activité sensorielle de l'homme, comme pratique humaine, non subjectivement " ou comme " activité révolutionnaire practico-critique"" (4).*

En fait, et c'est là le fond de la question, nous ne devons à aucun prix, que ce soit aujourd'hui ou rétrospectivement, faire la moindre concession à cette erreur fondamentale que l'on retrouve à chaque instant dans la lutte philosophique de Lénine contre les machistes et que répètent pieusement ses disciples les plus obscurs dans leur opposition aux tentatives matérialistes du positivisme scientifique d'aujourd'hui.

Selon cette conception erronée on peut et on doit préserver le caractère militant de la théorie matérialiste révolutionnaire, contre toutes les influences affaiblissantes venues d'autres tendances apparemment hostiles, et ceci par tous les moyens, en se gardant même de toute modification rendue inévitable par le développement de la critique et de la recherche scientifique. C'est cette conception qui a conduit Lénine à ne pas discuter les mérites des nouveaux concepts et

des nouvelles théories scientifiques. A ses yeux ils compromettraient la puissance éprouvée de cette philosophie matérialiste révolutionnaire (pourtant pas nécessairement prolétarienne) que son parti marxiste avait adoptée et qu'il tirait moins de l'enseignement de Marx et d'Engels que des matérialistes bourgeois d'Holbach à Feuerbach et de leur adversaire idéaliste, le philosophe de la dialectique : Hegel. Il resta sur ses positions préférant, dans un monde changeant, l'utilité pratique immédiate d'une idéologie connue, à la vérité théorique. Incidemment, cette attitude doctrinaire est calquée sur son comportement pratique dans le domaine politique. Elle correspond à la croyance inébranlable, jacobine, en une forme politique déterminée (parti, dictature, Etat), considérée comme adaptée aux buts des révolutions bourgeoises du passé et que, par conséquent, on s'attend à trouver adaptée tout autant aux buts de la révolution prolétarienne. Dans sa philosophie révolutionnaire matérialiste, comme dans sa politique révolutionnaire jacobine, Lénine refusait de voir cette vérité historique : sa révolution russe, en dépit d'un effort temporaire de dépassement de ses propres limites par une liaison avec le mouvement révolutionnaire du prolétariat d'Occident, ne pouvait être en réalité qu'un rejeton tardif des grandes révolutions bourgeoises d'autrefois.

Quel chemin parcouru de la violente attaque de Lénine contre le positivisme idéaliste et l'empiriocriticisme de Mach et d'Avenarius, à cette critique scientifique raffinée des derniers développements du positivisme qui vient de paraître, dans la revue ultra-cultivée du parti communiste anglais ! (5) Pourtant, sous-jacente à cette critique des formes les plus progressistes de la pensée positiviste moderne, on retrouve la même vieille erreur

léniniste. L'auteur évite soigneusement de se compromettre avec une quelconque école de pensée philosophique. C'est avec Wittgenstein, qui dans sa dernière période traite la philosophie comme une maladie incurable plutôt que comme un ensemble de problèmes, qu'il se sentirait le plus d'accord. Son argumentation contre le positivisme moderne repose entièrement sur l'hypothèse que le combat acharné mené par le vieux positivisme contre toute philosophie provenait de ce que le vieux positivisme était lui-même issu d'une croyance philosophique distincte. L'école des "positivistes logiques" — dont le représentant le plus typique est R. Carnap, et qui, à bien des égards, est la plus scientifique de ces écoles — vient d'abandonner, pour un temps, "toute tentative philosophique de construire un système homogène de lois, valable pour la science dans son ensemble" et s'attelle à une tâche plus modeste, celle d'unifier le langage de la science (6). Si l'on en croit l'argumentation développée par le critique pseudo-léniniste du *Modern Quaterly*, cette école verra diminuer son ardeur à combattre la philosophie par le processus même qui la conduit à abandonner son ancienne base philosophique. Selon ce critique " le positiviste qui troublait les eaux calmes de la philosophie en criant grossièrement à l'absurde", en est réduit maintenant à reconnaître de la façon la plus douce et la plus inoffensive : "l'absurdité est mon propre langage". On voit facilement que cet argument peut être utilisé de deux manières : d'abord pour une attaque théorique contre la confusion entre science et philosophie, qui régnait dans les premières phases du positivisme, et ensuite pour justifier pratiquement la conservation de cette base philosophique, bien que les découvertes récentes aient montré qu'elle n'avait aucun fondement scientifique. Mais tout ceci ne repose sur aucun

raisonnement logiquement ou empiriquement fondé. Point n'est besoin, pour un savant bourgeois moderne ou pour un marxiste, de se cramponner à une "philosophie" caduque (positiviste ou matérialiste) dans le but de garder intact son "esprit militant" pour la lutte contre ce système d'idées — nécessairement "idéaliste" dans toutes ses manifestations — qui, au cours du siècle dernier, a, sous le nom de "philosophie", largement (mais pas entièrement) remplacé la foi religieuse dans l'idéologie de la société moderne.

Harper, sans abandonner entièrement la croyance en la nécessité d'une "philosophie marxiste" pour la lutte révolutionnaire du prolétariat moderne, se rend parfaitement compte de ce que le matérialisme léniniste est absolument impropre à cette tâche. Tout au plus peut-il servir de base idéologique à un mouvement qui n'est plus anticapitaliste mais seulement "antiréactionnaire" et "antifasciste", celui que les partis communistes du monde entier ont lancé récemment sous le nom de "front populaire" ou même de "front national". Cette idéologie léniniste, que professent aujourd'hui les partis communistes et qui, en principe, est conforme à l'idéologie traditionnelle du vieux parti social-démocrate, n'exprime plus aucun des buts du prolétariat. Selon Harper elle est plutôt une expression naturelle des buts d'une "nouvelle classe" : l'intelligentsia. C'est donc une idéologie que les diverses couches de cette prétendue nouvelle classe seraient prêtes à adopter dès qu'elles seront libérées de l'influence idéologique de la bourgeoisie en déclin. Traduit en termes philosophiques ceci veut dire que le "nouveau matérialisme" de Lénine est devenu l'arme principale des partis communistes dans leur tentative de détacher une fraction importante de la bourgeoisie de la religion traditionnelle et des

philosophies idéalistes professées par cette couche supérieure de la bourgeoisie qui a, jusqu'à présent, détenu le pouvoir. Ce faisant les partis communistes espèrent gagner cette fraction de la bourgeoisie au système de planification industrielle, à ce capitalisme d'Etat qui, pour les ouvriers, n'est qu'une autre forme d'esclavage et d'exploitation. Tel est, selon Harper, le sens politique véritable de la philosophie matérialiste de Lénine.

*New-York, 1938.*

#### NOTES

- (1) Allusion aux activités scientifiques d'A. Pannekoek qui était un astronome de réputation mondiale.
- (2) Lénine *Cahiers sur la dialectique de Hegel*, (d'après la version allemande, "Philosophische Hefte", *Werke*, tome 38, 1964, p. 263).
- (3) Cet article n'est pas reproduit dans la traduction française actuelle.
- (4) K. Marx, op. cit. Il s'agit de la première thèse.
- (5) M. Black, "L'évolution du positivisme", *The Modern Quaterly I*, 1, Londres, 1938.
- (6) Rudolf Carnap, *Logical Evolution of the Unity of Science* (Les fondements logiques de l'unité de la science), 1938.

# STAAT UND KONTERREVOLUTION

KARL KORSCH (1939)

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Karl Korsch, **Politische Texte**, (Hrsg. von Erich Gerlach u. Jürgen Seifert), Wien o.D., S.180-94.

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## I

Mehr als jede frühere Periode der jüngsten Geschichte ist unsere Zeit nicht eine Zeit der Revolution, sondern der Konterrevolution. Das ist gleichermaßen wahr, ob wir nun diesen vergleichsweise neuen Begriff der Gesellschaftswissenschaften als bewußte Gegenaktion gegen einen vorausgegangenen revolutionären Prozeß definieren, oder ob wir ihn - gemeinsam mit einigen Italienern der jüngsten Vergangenheit und ihren Vorläufern im Nachkriegsfrankreich - im wesentlichen als „präventive Konterrevolution“ verstehen. Es handelt sich um eine Gegenaktion der vereinigten Kapitalistenklasse gegen alles, was heute vom ersten großen Aufstand des Proletariats im kriegszerrissenen Europa, der seinen Höhepunkt in der russischen Revolution vom Oktober 1917 hatte, geblieben ist. Außerdem umfaßt sie eine Reihe von „präventiven“ Maßnahmen der herrschenden Minderheit gegen solche neue revolutionäre Gefahren, wie sie sich in höchster Deutlichkeit in den jüngsten Ereignissen in Frankreich und Spanien offenbart haben und wie sie unter den gegenwärtigen Verhältnissen eines jeden Teiles von

Europa überall eintreten können, sei es das „rote“ Sowjetrußland oder das faschistische Italien, Nazideutschland oder eines der alten „demokratischen“ Länder.

Wie es der gesteigerten Bewußtheit des konterrevolutionären Geistes im Gegensatz zu den nur konservativen und reaktionären Tendenzen entspricht, ist das gemeinsame Ziel solcher Aushängeschilder der heutigen europäischen Politik wie Hitler und Mussolini, Daladier und Chamberlain nicht nur die zeitweilige Brechung des Widerstandes der Arbeiter gegen die wachsende Unterdrückung und Pauperisierung. Ihr wirkliches Ziel besteht darin, im nationalen und internationalen Maßstab Bedingungen zu schaffen, durch die jede künftige Bewegung der Arbeiterschaft „ernstlich und für eine lange Zeit“ unmöglich gemacht wird.

Diesem Ziel zuliebe sind alle Staatsmänner der sogenannten demokratischen Länder Europas bereit, mit jeder geheiligten Tradition zu brechen und jede in der Vergangenheit hochgehaltene „Idee“ aufzugeben. Für dieses Ziel opfern sie nicht nur - wie sie es immer getan haben - die Freiheit und Wohlfahrt ihrer Völker, sondern sogar einen Teil der Privilegien, die ihre Klasse bisher besaß. Sie sind sogar gewillt; einige ihrer traditionellen materiellen und ideellen Vorrechte, die persönliche Würde eingeschlossen, aufzugeben, und sie bemühen sich, als Juniorpartner an den Gewinnen teilzunehmen, die sie von der den Arbeitern durch die neuen konterrevolutionären Formen weitestgehender politischer, sozialer und kultureller Versklavung aufgezwungenen gesteigerten Ausbeutung erwarten.

## II

Die vorhergehende Darstellung handelt von den allgemeinen Aspekten der heutigen europäischen Konterrevolution, wie sie sich nach der vernichtenden Niederlage aller Versuche, die Revolution von 1917 auszuweiten, entwickelt haben und deren Zweck es war, der neuen proletarischen Gesellschaft in Rußland eine passende, zeitgemäße Umgebung in anderen europäischen und außereuropäischen Ländern zu geben. Ein besonderer und besonders trauriger Aspekt ergibt sich für alle - außer den hartnäckigsten und verblendetsten Anhängern der kommunistischen Parteipolitik - daraus, daß auch der aus dem ersten proletarischen Sieg in Sowjetrußland hervorgegangene neue Arbeiterstaat seinen eindeutig revolutionären Charakter schon lange verloren hat. In einem historischen Prozeß, der vorläufig und im Hinblick auf weitere Untersuchungen als eine schrittweise Degeneration beschrieben werden mag, hat der russische Staat in seiner inneren Funktionsweise seine früheren revolutionären und proletarischen Züge immer mehr aufgegeben. Durch die Folgerichtigkeit und die umfassende Natur seiner antidemokratischen und totalitären Entwicklung hat er die sogenannten faschistischen Züge der offen konterrevolutionären Staaten Europas und Asiens oft vorweggenommen. Sogar heute gehen die Strafen für kleinste Abweichungen von den vorgeschriebenen Verhaltens- und Meinungsmustern weit über die Gewaltmaßnahmen hinaus, die im faschistischen Italien oder im Nazideutschland gegen Nonkonformismus angewandt werden. Auf der internationalen Bühne nahm das neue russische Commonwealth immer mehr am Spiel der imperialistischen Politik, an Militärbündnissen mit



bestimmten Gruppen von bürgerlichen Staaten gegen andere Gruppen von bürgerlichen Staaten teil. Es leistete auch seinen vollen Beitrag zu dem, was in der irreführenden Sprache moderner bürgerlicher Diplomatie als Förderung des „Friedens“, der „kollektiven Sicherheit“ und „Nichteinmischung“ bezeichnet wird. So ist zumindest die führende Bürokratie des sogenannten Arbeiterstaates unabänderlich in den konterrevolutionären Aspekt der heutigen europäischen Politik verwickelt.

Unter den weitgehend veränderten Bedingungen des Klassenkampfes der Arbeiter gilt heute mehr als zuvor, was Lenin im *Vorwort* seiner Streitschrift **Staat und Revolution** über die zunehmende Bedeutung der Frage des Staates sowohl für die Theorie als auch für die Analyse der praktischen Politik schrieb. Der imperialistische Krieg und die Weiterentwicklung seiner Ergebnisse während der vergangenen 20 Jahre haben sowohl die Umwandlung des Monopolkapitalismus in den staatsmonopolistischen Kapitalismus als auch die ungeheuerliche Unterdrückung der arbeitenden Massen durch den immer inniger mit den allmächtigen Kapitalistenverbänden verschmelzenden Staat beträchtlich beschleunigt und intensiviert. Sogar die anscheinend vorübergehenden und kriegsbedingten Wirkungen dieser Entwicklung sind dauerhaft geworden und in der Tat normale Züge des heutigen Kapitalismus als Ganzes. Es besteht heute kein Zweifel am dauerhaften Charakter des von Lenin vor 20 Jahren beschriebenen Prozesses, durch den „die fortgeschrittenen Länder [...] - wir sprechen von ihrem ‘Hinterlande’ - in Militärlagerhäuser für Arbeiter“ umgewandelt werden. [\[1\]](#)

Jedoch ist es unter den Bedingungen einer existenten Konterrevolution heute keineswegs ausreichend, nur jene eindrucksvollen Feststellungen zu wiederholen, mit denen Lenin 1917 die revolutionäre Marxsche Theorie des Staates und des Verhältnisses der proletarischen Revolution zum Staat wiederherstellte. Es ist abwegig, wenn sich die Trotzisten heute auf „Lenins glänzende Formulierung“ als auf eine am Vorabend der Oktoberrevolution geschriebene Arbeit beziehen, „die den Massen nicht nur Rußlands, sondern der ganzen Welt zukünftig (als Leitfaden, wenn die Bolschewiki ihr Ziel nicht erreichen sollten) die Bedeutung der Arbeiterdemokratie erklären sollte.. Das war nie das Ziel jenes großen Umsetzers der traditionellen marxistischen Theorie in die Aktion. Als der Ausbruch der politischen Krise den Abschluß seiner theoretischen Arbeit verhinderte, fügte er seiner Streitschrift die frohlockende Bemerkung hinzu, daß es „angenehmer und nützlicher“ ist, „die ‘Erfahrungen der Revolution‘ durchzumachen, als über sie zu schreiben“. [\[2\]](#)

### III

Heute hat sich die gesamte Lage grundlegend geändert. Es hat keinen Zweck, in der ideologischen Sphäre der Irrealität die materialistische und völlig praktische Philosophie des revolutionären Staates, wie sie Marx und Engels ausgearbeitet haben und Lenin sie neu formuliert hat, fortzusetzen. Wir könnten ebenso mit Plato über die vollkommenste Form des idealen Staates und seine schließliche Wiederherstellung durch das konterrevolutionäre Reich Hitlers philosophieren, dieser wahren irdischen Erfüllung des hochmütigen Platoschen Traumes des Überganges von der verderbten Demokratie

zur „edlen Tyrannis, die sich von allen vorhergehenden Formen unterscheidet, die vierte und letzte Krankheit des Staates“. [\[3\]](#)

Es war für das russische Proletariat und seine bolschewistischen Führer sehr nützlich, 1917 die Erfahrung der wirklich beginnenden Revolution zu machen, statt über sie zu philosophieren oder zu schreiben. Die Arbeiterschaft in und außerhalb Rußlands kann heute den ständigen Vormarsch der Konterrevolution nicht einfach hinnehmen, ohne mit allen ihr zugänglichen Mitteln darüber nachzudenken. Durch sorgfältige Prüfung der Vergangenheit muß sie sowohl die objektiven als auch die subjektiven Ursachen des Sieges des faschistischen Staatskapitalismus herausfinden. Sie muß seine gegenwärtige Entwicklung genau beobachten, um alle alten und neuen Widersprüche und Antagonismen, die in dieser Entwicklung auftreten, zu erkennen. Sie muß schließlich einen praktischen Weg finden, um zunächst einmal als Klasse dem weiteren Vordringen der Konterrevolution Widerstand zu leisten und später vom aktiven Widerstand zu einer noch aktiveren Gegenoffensive überzugehen, die dann zur Abschaffung sowohl der neuen Form des Staatskapitalismus als auch der allen alten und neuen Formen der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft und ihres Staates inhärenten Prinzipien der Unterdrückung und Ausbeutung führt.

Wir brauchen vor allem eine richtige und umfassende Analyse der neuen Aspekte, die die allgemeine Theorie des Staates angesichts der existenten Konterrevolution erhält. Diese besondere Aufgabe wurde bisher ohne jeden Zweifel vernachlässigt. Das gilt trotz der gewaltigen Arbeit, die auf diesem Gebiet durch Marx,

Engels und ihre konsequentesten Fortsetzer bis zu Luxemburg, Lenin und Trotzki auf der einen Seite und durch Proudhon, Bakunin und die späteren Wortführer des revolutionären Anarchismus und Syndikalismus auf der anderen Seite geleistet wurde.

#### IV

Allerdings wäre es nicht notwendig, eine besondere Untersuchung über den konterrevolutionären Staat durchzuführen, wenn, entsprechend den übertreibenden Verallgemeinerungen der Anarchisten, jeder Staat zu jeder Zeit - der aus der proletarischen Revolution hervorgehende Arbeiterstaat eingeschlossen - seinem Wesen nach den proletarischen Zielen entgegen- stünde. Dieser abstrakte Grundsatz hinderte jedoch den großen proletarischen Denker Proudhon nicht, den Staatsstreich vom 2. Dezember 1851 als einen historischen Sieg der sozialen Revolution zu begrüßen.

Wenn wir auf dieses erste Auftreten einer quasi-faschistischen Gegenrevolution nach dem Scheitern der französischen Revolution von 1848 zurückschauen, bemerken wir eine überraschende Ähnlichkeit zwischen den jüngsten Äußerungen einiger angeblich fortschrittlicher und revolutionärer Schriftsteller über Hitler und Mussolini und den ersten Reaktionen praktisch aller progressiven Schulen, Marx und Engels nicht ausgeschlossen, auf den Staatsstreich Louis Napoleons im Jahre 1851. So wie der gemäßigt bürgerlich-fortschrittliche Exminister Guizot auf die Nachricht vom Staatsstreich in den Alarmruf ausbrach: „Das ist der vollständige und endgültige Sieg des Sozialismus!“, so wie Proudhon über die „Soziale

Revolution, aufgezeigt am Staatsstreich [4] vom 2. Dezember“ [1\*] philosophierte, gab sich Marx der gleichen Täuschung hin, obgleich er sich über die persönliche Ungeeignetheit Louis Bonapartes für die von ihm für eine kurze Zeit usurpierte quasirevolutionäre Rolle viel mehr im klaren war. Ein Beweis ist seine paradoxe Feststellung:

Nicht in seinen unmittelbaren tragikomischen Errungenschaften brach sich der revolutionäre Fortschritt Bahn, sondern umgekehrt in der Erzeugung einer geschlossenen, mächtigen Konterrevolution, in der Erzeugung eines Gegners, durch dessen Bekämpfung erst die Umsturzpartei zu einer wirklich revolutionären Partei heranreife. [5]

Es ist in der Tat nur ein kleiner Schritt von dieser Marxschen (und auch Guizotschen und Proudhonschen) Selbsttäuschung zu den bemerkenswerten Illusionen, denen sich die deutschen Kommunisten und ihre russischen Herren nach der Machtübernahme Hitlers hingaben. Sie begrüßten den Sieg eines unverfälschten und offenen Faschismus über das, was sie bis dahin als eine verkappte, aber um so hassenswertere Form des Sozialfaschismus beschrieben hatten, d.h. die politische Herrschaft der Sozialdemokratischen Partei im Nachkriegsdeutschland. Sie sagten einen schnellen Zusammenbruch der neuen konterrevolutionären Regierung voraus, der zu einer proletarischen Revolution führen werde, und begrüßten so ihre eigene Niederlage sowie außerdem die dauernde Niederlage aller fortschrittlichen Tendenzen in Deutschland und in ganz Europa als einen „Sieg des Kommunismus“.

Es ist die Meinung des Schreibers dieser Zeilen, daß die offenbare Unkenntnis der besonderen Natur konterrevolutionären Geschehens, die bei diesen Gelegenheiten von den älteren und neueren marxistischen Schulen gezeigt wurde, nicht bloßer persönlicher Zufall ist. Sie ist vielmehr in einer verborgenen Weise mit dem ganzen geschichtlichen Charakter der Marxschen Theorie der proletarischen Revolution verbunden, die, wie an anderer Stelle gezeigt wird, in vieler Hinsicht, in Inhalt und Form noch die Muttermaße der bürgerlichen revolutionären Theorie des Jakobinismus und Blanquismus [2\*] trägt. Das gilt besonders für die politischen Aspekte der Marxschen Theorie, für die Marxschen Lehren von der sogenannten „Permanenten Revolution“ [6] und der „Diktatur des Proletariats“ und von der Leninschen Lehre von der Führerschaft der revolutionären politischen Partei vor, während und nach der Eroberung des bürgerlichen Staates, wie sie in den *Leitsätzen über die Rolle der Kommunistischen Partei in der proletarischen Revolution* [7], die vom 3. Kommunistischen Weltkongreß 1920 angenommen wurden, niedergelegt ist.

Unter diesem Gesichtspunkt wird es sogar möglich, in rationaler Weise an jene beunruhigenden Probleme heranzugehen, die während der letzten 20 Jahre die besten marxistischen Revolutionäre immer wieder bedrängt und gequält haben, wenn diese sich der tiefen Widersprüche zwischen dem ununterbrochenen Fortbestand einer sogenannten proletarischen Diktatur und der wachsenden Unterdrückung nicht nur aller proletarischen und sozialistischen, sondern sogar der

elementärsten demokratischen und fortschrittlichen Tendenzen in Sowjetrußland bewußt geworden waren. Wie geschah es, daß der aus der russischen Revolution von 1917 hervorgegangene Arbeiterstaat ohne „Thermidor“ oder „Brumaire“ langsam aus einem Instrument der proletarischen Revolution in ein Instrument der gegenwärtigen europäischen Konterrevolution umgeformt wurde? Was ist die Ursache für die besonders große Ähnlichkeit zwischen der kommunistischen Diktatur in Rußland und ihrem anscheinend größten Widersacher und Gegenspieler, den faschistischen Diktaturen in Italien und Deutschland?

## VI

In den Grenzen dieses kurzen Artikels kann nicht auf die Einzelheiten der konkreten geschichtlichen Entwicklung eingegangen werden. Es soll nur jene unheimliche Zweideutigkeit, mit der eine revolutionäre Diktatur von ihren Anfängen an ihre mögliche künftige Umformung in einen konterrevolutionären Staat einschließt, bis auf eine entsprechende Zweideutigkeit der revolutionären Marxschen Theorie selbst zurückverfolgt werden. Wenn die politischen Konzepte des Marxismus sich aus der großen Tradition der bürgerlichen Revolution ableiten, wenn die Nabelschnur zwischen Marxismus und Jakobinismus nie durchgeschnitten wurde, dann erscheint es als weniger paradox, daß der revolutionär-marxistische Staat in seiner gegenwärtigen Entwicklung den großen geschichtlichen Prozeß des Niederganges widerspiegelt, in dem heute in jedem europäischen Land die führenden Fraktionen der Bourgeoisie ihre früheren politischen Ideale aufgeben. Es hört auf, unbegreifbar zu sein, daß der russische Staat in seiner gegenwärtigen

Struktur als ein mächtiger Hebel der Faschisierung Europas dient.

Trotzdem enthält diese der politischen Lehre von Marx eigene Zweideutigkeit in sich nichts anderes als die abstrakte Möglichkeit jener radikalen Entartung. Wie die proletarische Revolution gemäß dem materialistischen Prinzip von Marx nicht ausschließlich oder in erster Linie eine bewußte, gewollte Aktion von isolierten Gruppen, Parteien oder sogar „Klassen. ist, so ist die heutige kapitalistische Gegenrevolution in erster Linie das Ergebnis einer objektiven ökonomischen Entwicklung der Gesellschaft - obgleich natürlich weder eine revolutionäre noch eine gegenrevolutionäre Aktion mit Notwendigkeit aus der bloßen Tatsache entsteht, daß sie ökonomisch möglich geworden ist. Folglich kann die wirkliche Ursache des Überganges des revolutionären Arbeiterstaates in Rußland in seine gegenwärtige gegenrevolutionäre Gestalt nicht in irgendwelchen Besonderheiten seiner politischen Form gefunden werden, mag das nun der Grundsatz der „revolutionären Diktatur. oder die Diktatur einer (einzigen) Partei im Gegensatz zu einer Diktatur der revolutionären Sowjets oder der proletarischen „Klasse“ als Ganzes sein. Wir müssen vielmehr die Ursache dieser allmählichen Verwandlung des politischen Überbaues in einer ihr zugrunde liegenden ökonomischen Entwicklung der Klassenkräfte suchen.

Aus dieser materialistischen Sicht ist es wenig verwunderlich, daß der russische Arbeiterstaat seinen ursprünglichen proletarischen Charakter nicht aufrechterhalten konnte, als er nach der Niederwerfung aller revolutionären Bewegungen außerhalb Rußlands zum bloßen Treibriemen reduziert wurde, der die



drosselnden und zerstörenden Wirkungen der kapitalistischen Weltwirtschaft auf die höchst bescheidenen Anfänge einer wirklichen sozialistischen Wirtschaft übertrug, wie sie in Sowjetrußland in der Periode des sogenannten Kriegskommunismus von 1919 geschaffen worden war. Das wirklich Bemerkenswerte, das es nie vorher in der Geschichte gab, besteht darin, daß gerade jene neuen, für antibürgerlich gehaltenen Züge des russischen Staates, die als Mittel der Verteidigung des proletarischen Gehalts der russischen Gesellschaft gedacht waren - zusammen mit den „neuen“ gegenrevolutionären, nach dem Modell der russischen Diktatur gestalteten Staaten - als Instrument nicht nur der Umkehrung des Sozialismus in Rußland, sondern auch einer neuen, bewußt gegenrevolutionären Umformung des gesamten traditionellen Rahmens der europäischen kapitalistischen Gesellschaft gedient haben sollten: „Ist es auch Wahnsinn, hat es doch Methode.“

Dieses erregende Problem durch eine nüchterne materialistische Untersuchung zu lösen, ist heute die Hauptaufgabe der marxistischen Erforschung des Problems des Staates und der Konterrevolution. Indem wir dies versuchen, dürfen wir mit Hobbes (als dieser im **Behemoth** auf die Entwicklung der englischen Revolution und Gegenrevolution 1640-1660 zurückblickte) erwarten, daß auch wir, die wir wie vom Berg des Teufels auf die geschichtliche Entwicklung der letzten 20 Jahre zurückschauen, „einen Überblick über alle Arten von Ungerechtigkeiten und Torheiten, die die Welt sich je leisten konnte, bekommen haben [würden. Wir würden sehen], wie diese Ungerechtigkeiten und Torheiten von den Müttern Heuchelei und „Dünkel geboren wurden, deren eine die doppelte Ungerechtigkeit, die andere die zwiefache Torheit

verkörpert.“ [8] Aber gleichzeitig würden wir auch volle Einsicht in die Aktionen, die damals stattfanden, und in „ihre Ursachen, Vorwände, Gerechtigkeit, Reihenfolge, Listen und Erfolge“ finden. [9]

## Fußnoten

1\*. **La Révolution sociale démontrée par le Coup d'État du 2 décembre**, Paris 1868; deutsche Ausgabe: Die soziale Revolution durch den Staatsstreich vom 2. Dezember 1851, Bremen 1878.

2\*. S. unsere Besprechung *Das Problem von Staatseinheit - Föderalismus in der französischen Revolution*, in: **Archiv für die Geschichte des Sozialismus und der Arbeiterbewegung**, hrsgg. von Carl Grünberg, Jg. 15, Leipzig 1930, S.126-146; die beiden Aufsätze über *Revolutionäre Kommune*, in: **Die Aktion**, Jg. 19, Nr.5/6 (Ende Sept. 1929), Sp.176-181 u. Jg. 21, Nr.3/4 (Juli 1931), Sp.60-64; *Thesen über Hegel und die Revolution*, in: **Gegner**, Jg. 6, Nr.3 (5.2.1932), S.11-12; *Thesen zur Kritik des faschistischen Staatsbegriffs*, in: **Gegner**, Jg. 6, Nr.4/5 (März 1932), S.20; außerdem die einschlägigen Stellen unseres kürzlich erschienenen Buches über Karl Marx, London-New York, 1938.

## Anmerkungen

1. Lenin, **Staat und Revolution**, *Vorwort zur ersten Auflage*, Werke, Bd.25, S.395.

2. Ebd., Nachwort zur Auflage (30.11.1917), **Werke**, Bd.25, S.507.

3. Platon, **Der Staat**, (Achstes Buch, 1. Kap.) 544c.

4. Konterrevolutionärer Staatsstreich Louis Bonapartes.

5. Karl Marx, **Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich 1848 bis 1850** (1850), **MEW** Bd.7, S.11.

6. Von der „Permanenten Revolution ist die Rede in: Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Ansprache der Zentralbehörde an den Bund vom März 1850*, **MEW**, Bd.7. S.249 und 254. Zur Diktatur des Proletariats s. Arkadij Gurland, **Marxismus und Diktatur**, Leipzig 1930, insbes. S.97-109; dort findet man auch Hinweise auf die entsprechenden Quellen bei Marx und Engels.

7. **Der I. und II. Kongreß der Kommunistischen Internationale**, hrsgg. vom Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus beim ZK der SED Berlin 1959, S.154-163; vgl. auch die *Leitsätze über die kommunistischen Parteien und den Parlamentarismus*, **ebd.**, S.187-196 und die *Leitsätze über die Grundlagen der Kommunistischen Internationale*, **ebd.**, S.243-259.

8. Thomas Hobbes: [**Behemoth**] **The History oftbe Civil Wars of England, From the year 1640 to 1660** (1679), erster Dialog. Deutsche Übersetzung nach: *Behemoth oder das Lange Parlament*, in: Julius Lips. **Die Stellung des Thomas Hobbes zu den politischen Parteien der großen englischen Revolution**, Leipzig 1927, S.102f.

9. Hobbes, **ebd.**, S.103.



**THE FIGHT FOR BRITAIN, THE FIGHT  
FOR DEMOCRACY, AND THE WAR AIMS  
OF THE WORKING CLASS.**

( Prolegomena to a political discussion )

Karl Korsch

From:

["http://www.geocities.com/~johngray/index.html#toc"](http://www.geocities.com/~johngray/index.html#toc)

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There is no better means of finding out how far we have traveled since the 19th century workers' movement collapsed in the cataclysm of the first world war than to raise the question of the war aims of the international working class today. There is nothing left in 1941 of that misleading simplicity in which for the class conscious minority of the social democratic parties of 1914 the problem of a true or false war policy resolved itself into a choice between outright betrayal and an unswerving allegiance to the revolutionary duty of an unconditional resistance to the capitalist war. The glorious example set by Liebknecht in Germany, by the Bolsheviks in Russia, and by certain other Marxist groups in Europe was admired everywhere. The adverse policies followed by the right wing and by the so-called Marxist centre were never wholeheartedly accepted by the masses of the proletarian membership, although much suffering and a full military defeat were needed to exhaust the endurance

of the social democratic workers in Germany. Even when that point had been reached, the great majority of the workers were not prepared to do more than admire the new example of revolutionary consistency set by the Bolsheviks in Russia. They did not join the small groups of class conscious workers in Germany who at that time rallied round the Spartacus-Bund and the Workers Councils in an attempt to proceed from revolutionary resistance to the capitalist war to a veritable overthrow of the capitalist state and the capitalist system of production. In their actual practice, the great majority of the German workers did nothing to prevent that gigantic fraud by which the right wing leadership of the social democratic party and of the trade unions transformed its belligerent patriotism of the war period into the mock democracy of the Weimar Republic and the mock pacifism of the League of Nations. For the next fifteen years this provided a propitious atmosphere for the lusty growth of the new anti-democratic and anti-pacifistic power of fascism. Thus the social nationalism of the social democrats of 1914 came to rest in the national socialism of 1933.

The first lesson to be learned from this short recapitulation of working class war policies is a more realistic appreciation of the intrinsic difficulties of a truly proletarian attitude toward the war. In view of the tremendous discouragement that followed the comparative optimism of the last generation of revolutionaries with respect to this task, it is worthwhile to point out that the greater part of these difficulties already existed in 1914-18. They found their expression then in the contrast between powerful working class organizations without a proletarian policy and the

revolutionary slogans of an extremely powerless class conscious minority. Neither side of this contrast can be said to have embodied in itself the war policy of the German working class. We cannot even say in retrospect which of the two was in more clear agreement with the tactics recommended by Marx and Engels in the event of a European war. The further development, both in Soviet Russia where the left wing had had its way and in Germany where it had been crushed, shows clearly that the European working class as a whole had not developed a policy that enabled it to transform the capitalist war into a proletarian revolution or even to prevent the reestablishment of bourgeois class rule in a re-enforced form by the victory of the fascist counter-revolution.

## II

None of the revolutionary slogans of the last war can be immediately applied to the much more intricate problems that arise from the immensely more entangled state of affairs today. There is no longer a need for the revolutionary workers of 1941 to bring about by their own consistent effort that "transformation of the capitalist war into a civil war" that was described as the ultimate aim of the working class by the most daring revolutionary slogan of 1914. The present war from its very outset ( or even from its preparatory phases, the phase of the protests against Japanese aggression in Manchuria, the sanctions against the Italian conquest of Ethiopia, the "non-intervention" in Spain ) has been a veritable civil war on both a European and a world-wide scale.

We do not know enough about the currents below the surface of present-day Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Russia, Japan and other totalitarian states that might come to the top under conditions of strain and defeat. But we had ample opportunities both before and after the fact to study the conditions preceding the rape of Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, and the collapse of France. We have no reason to believe that, with the outbreak of war or, for that matter, with the "miracle of Dunkirk", all the "appeasement" and outright pro-Nazi tendencies that up to then had been represented by the Cliveden and Chamberlain groups in England have been wiped out in favor of a grand unanimity of purpose. ( We admit suffering an invincible distrust of all forms of "sacred unions" ever since the days of the first world war. ) Last and not least, we are aware of the powerful undercurrents of present-day American politics Thus we



can safely say that in every "democratic" country today the ruling class is divided within itself. So far all Hitlerian victories have been victories in a civil war. There are two Norways, two Hollands, two Frances today, and the first day of restored "peace" ( with or without a previous German invasion ) will show that there are also two Great Britains.

Under such conditions no slogan that could be devised for an independent war policy of the working class today can escape being tinged with the same ambiguity that is so strikingly apparent in the policy of the ruling classes. "Down with the imperialist war !" -- was a plausible war aim of the proletarian class so long as the war represented the supreme form of the united will of the bourgeoisie of one country to survive and to conquer in the struggle that was waged both against the hostile competition of the other national units of the bourgeois class and against the threatening proletarian revolt. The slogan has lost all of its former revolutionary force at the present time when it fits in so perfectly with the tendencies of the bourgeois appeasers; and isolationists. "Defeat of one's own country !" -- was regarded as the most insidious of all the weapons of the class war when it was used as a slogan by the revolutionary defeatists in Russia and Germany in 1914. Latterly it became a practical policy of that substantial part of the ruling class in various European countries that preferred the victory of fascism to the loss of its economic and political supremacy.

Despite this apparent ambiguity of every description of the war aims of the working class that can be devised under present conditions, there is no point in turning from a strictly independent war policy of the proletarian

class to one or another "classless" substitute. It is the most distressing experience of our time to see those inveterate labor leaders, who have, for almost thirty years, incessantly advised the workers to sacrifice their independent class action for the sake of their "fatherland" or for the defense of an assumedly "progressive" fraction of the bourgeoisie against an assumedly less progressive fraction of that same bourgeois class, resuming their old game with slightly modified phraseology. It is even more distressing to see those well-known people being joined today by so many formerly class-conscious socialists. Both the old professionals and the disenchanted newcomers ask the workers to subscribe to one or another kind of interventionist, anti-fascist, or "Save Democracy First" program by pointing to the defeats and frustrations that have been suffered in the past by all attempts at an independent revolutionary policy of the working class. The utter futility of this "historical proof" has been shown above. The defeat of the workers in the war and post-war period did not result from the failure of the revolutionary attempts of the minority any more than from the policies of the majority leadership. Both the genuine attempts at a revolutionary war policy and the classless substitutes for that policy have led to the same result. No fatherland was saved from defeat through the sacrifices of the German workers in 1914-18. No democracy was preserved by the sacrifices made by the workers during the episode of the Weimar Republic. No peace was secured by the workers' acceptance of the international bourgeois policies of the League of Nations.

### III

The urgent advice given to the workers from all sides today -- that in order to defend themselves they have first of all to join in the common task of defending "democracy" against the murderous assaults of fascism -- bears a striking resemblance to a number of other much embattled slogans of the day. It seems to have become quite fashionable to think, in this age of substitutes, that to achieve something one has first to endeavor to do something else.

There is, first, the slogan of the interventionist fraction of the American bourgeoisie : "Defend America through aiding Britain !". This seems to convey the idea that even if we take it for granted that the supreme goal for Americans is to defend America, this goal is not adequately served under present conditions, by such simple and direct methods as those advocated by the "America First" program, but can be served only by active intervention in the present war on the side of Great Britain. We are not in a position to judge the relative merits of either of these plans from a strictly strategical point of view. But we strongly suspect that the real division between the adherents of the two slogans is not based on any strategical reasons at all. They do not express two different ways of furthering the common interests of the American bourgeoisie as a whole ( and even less the interests of the American people ). They rather express the different material interests and ensuing political philosophies of two definite fractions of the American bourgeoisie, or two different concepts of a desirable future development of the internal and external policies of the growing American empire. It is in this internal conflict of the

ruling class that one side -- the interventionist side as against the isolationist side -- tries further to fortify its position through another appeal, which for the purpose of this discussion is most conveniently summed up in the slogan : "Defend democracy through defending Britain !" ( Here by the way, appears the ultimate purpose of that other slogan which asked the workers to defend their own rights by defending democracy. The credo of present-day interventionist "socialism" boils down to the same miserable substitute as that of present-day Stalinist "communism" : the defense of the power politics of a particular state. )

There is one flaw in the clever device of making the present British empire the international champion of the fight for democracy ( thus at the same time of the fight for socialism ). It showed itself in the recent discussion of the advisability of an official announcement of the British war aims.

True friendship should be mutual. If the fight for Britain is assumed to be a fight for democracy, the British government should openly accept, in unmistakable words, the obligations connected with this world championship. It should openly announce its democratic war aims.

This seems simple enough. ( It should be noticed that nobody up to now has asked from the Churchill government anything more than a solemn declaration in words. Nobody made the help of the friends of democracy, the help of the workers for the British victory, dependent on an immediate practical step -- say the long overdue "democratization" of the British rule in India. )

Yet to make their argument acceptable to a government that up to now has never betrayed any particular attachment to further progress towards democracy, the friends of democracy approached the question from another angle. ( Who would have expected them to approach any question in a straight line anyhow ? ) They agreed that for the British the victory of Britain must be the supreme goal. But this goal, they went on, cannot be reached, under present conditions, by a mere military fight. It can be reached only by that powerful mobilization of all progressive forces of humanity that would result from the solemn announcement of a truly democratic British war program.

Even so, the plea for an early announcement of the British war aims did not prevail over the opposite reasoning which points to the possible weakening of the apparent unity of the British ( and the American ) public if such highly controversial question were to be openly discussed. Again it is easy to see that the real point of dispute lies deeper. The whole debate on the advisability of an open announcement of the British war aims is only an ideological expression of an altogether different division within the British ( and American ) bourgeoisie. The conservative British government knows full well that an important fraction of the ruling class of America is much less concerned with the lack of democracy in the present British set-up than it is interested in the assurance that the actual war aims of Great Britain will at no time assume a too "democratic" character that could endanger the security of the existing capitalistic regime. The ruling class of the fully developed capitalist countries no longer splits on such general political issues as that between "democratic progress" and "conservative

power politics". If it splits at all, it will be split on the much more realistic question of conflicting material interests.

In spite of the contrary illusions of a small and comparatively powerless group of political idealists, the ultimate fate of the British empire in its present desperate struggle against the Nazi aggressors does not depend on the outcome of the present world-wide ideological fight between the "democratic" and the "fascist" principles. It will not even be decided by the comparative strength of the fighting armies or by the superior technical equipment that may result from American all-out help to Britain. The outcome of the present war depends in the first place on the degree of internal division within the ruling capitalist class in England itself that, after a temporary truce between the pre-war appeasers and the Churchillites, reasserts itself in the beginning struggle for or against the announcement of the British war aims. It will be decided in the last instance by the repercussions that the bitter fight of conflicting capitalist groups, at present fought out both by the war and by internal struggles within each country, will produce in the hitherto immobilized third camp, the camp of the proletarian class. We do not hesitate to say that if the assumed supreme goal of humanity in our time, the defeat of Hitler and the wiping out of fascism, can be reached at all, it will be reached in no other manner than by the independent fight of the working class for its most elementary, most narrowly defined, most concrete class aims. Not Great Britain, not "democracy", but the proletarian class is the world champion in the revolutionary fight of humanity against the scourge of fascism.

Beta.

## **THE WORKERS' FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM**

Karl Korsch

From:

<http://www.geocities.com/~johngray/index.html#toc>

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"Democracy" -- a self-styled name for the traditional set-up of present day capitalist society -- is fighting a losing battle against the attacking forces of fascism (nazism, falangism, iron guardism, and so forth). The workers stand by. They seem to say again what their predecessors, the revolutionary workers of Paris in 1849, said in regard to the final struggle between the leaders of a self-defeated liberal democracy and the quasi-fascist chief of a new Napoleonic imperialism, Louis Bonaparte.

They say (as interpreted by Marx and Engels), "C'est une affaire pour Messieurs les bourgeois." (This time it's a matter to be settled among the bosses.)

The "secret" underlying the verbal battles between "totalitarianism" and "anti-totalitarianism" and the more important diplomatic and military struggle between the Axis and the Anglo-American group of imperialist powers is the historical fact that the worst, and the most intimate foe of democracy today is not Herr Hitler, but "democracy" itself.

Yet this is not a problem of "split personality" nor can it be explained as an "inferiority complex," or a "father complex," or any of the other lofty creations of Freudian psychology. It is not even a conflict between old age and youth, or, as Mrs. Lindbergh puts it, between "the forces of the past and the forces of the future."

The real facts underlying all these high-sounding phrases are to be sought nowhere else but -- re-enter Marx -- in the material basis of all ideological conflicts, that is, in the economic structure of contemporary society or in the impasse that modern capitalism has reached in the present phase of its historical development.

### Ambiguities of Democracy

We must not, however, jump to conclusions. Before we explain the basic reasons for the ambiguities of "Democracy" in its present "fight" against the fascist challenge, we must deal somewhat more closely with the phenomenon itself. We must show that the assumed split, though it does not exist in any psychological, anthropological or cosmic sense, does yet exist as a very real split in what, for want of a better term, we shall continue to call the "class consciousness" of the ruling strata of present-day society.

We shall not waste our time with a discussion of the more conspicuous forms in which this condition manifests itself -- a world-wide war between two equally capitalistic parts of that one big capitalistic power that rules the world today and the open division of each of the fighting parties into mutually opposed factions. In spite of the fact that in our truly "Chinese" age every



party and every faction endeavours above all to "save face" by hiding its own and borrowing, its opponents' slogans and by pretending "not to offer any solution," it is sufficiently clear today that the same divisions that became visible in the collapse of Norway, Holland, Belgium, and France exist and develop in various forms both in the actually fighting, and the so-called neutral "democracies." This alone is sufficient to prove that the present "war" is fundamentally a "civil war," and will be decided in the future, just as it has been up to now, not by the relative military, or even the economic, strength of the fighting countries, but by the help that the attacking force of fascism will get from its allies within the "democratic" countries. The main task of the following paragraphs is to deal with the less conspicuous manner in which this internal strife pervades the "conscience" of every group, of every institution, and, as it were, of every single member of present-day "democratic" society.

The American public today hates and fears the growing threat of fascism. It takes a fervent interest in the various official and non-official forms of the search for "Trojan horses" and "fifth columnists." It girds itself for the defence of the democratic traditions against the attack that is brought nearer our shores by the progress of the Nazi war in Europe, Africa, and Asia. At the same time, an increasing part of this American public is secretly convinced of the several material benefits that could be derived for the so-called elite and, to a lesser extent, for the mass of the people as well, from an acceptance of fascist methods in the field of economics, politics, and, maybe, even for the promotion of the so-called higher Cultural and ideological interests. It is apt to regard the very institutions and ideals for which it is prepared to

"fight" as a kind of "faux frais" of production, of conducting the business of an efficient modern administration, and of fighting a modern war. It never seriously considered "democratic" methods is an adequate means of running an important private business, or, for that matter, a business-like trade union. It would prefer, on the whole, to have its cake and eat it too, that is, to apply those amazingly successful new methods to the fullest advantage, and yet at the same time, somehow retain a workable "maximum" of the traditional "democratic" amenities.

It is easy to see that this more or less platonic attachment to the great democratic tradition, in spite of the assumedly greater material advantages of the fascist methods, offers small comfort for the real prospects of democracy in times of a serious, and hitherto unconquerable crisis. In fact, an increasing number of the foremost spokesmen, the most vociferous "experts," and the truest friends of democracy begin to express some grave doubts as to whether their unyielding allegiance to the "underlying values of the democratic American tradition" has not already degenerated into a costly hobby that the nation may, or, in the long run, may not be able to afford. (This sentiment became most evident in the all too response of the greater part of the American "democratic" public to Anne Lindbergh's booklet.)

There are some definite fields in which even the most fervent opposers of the ruthlessness of the fascist principles admit an undeniable superiority of totalitarian achievements. There is, for example, universal admiration for the splendid work done by the Nazi propaganda. There is widespread belief in the full

success of the Nazi attack against the most incurable plagues of modern democratic society. Fascism is supposed to have abolished permanent mass unemployment and, by one bold stroke, to have released the brakes put on free enterprise by wages disputes and labor unrest. There is a tacit agreement that an all-round adoption of fascist methods will be necessary in time of war.

### An Economic Pythia

The most striking testimony to present-day democracy's implicit belief in an overwhelming superiority of fascist methods is to be found in an official document published in June, 1939, by the National Resources Committee, that deals with the basic characteristics of The Structure of the American Economy. [\[1\]](#) We shall make ample use of this report when we approach the main question of our present investigation. For the moment, however, we shall disregard the momentous discoveries made by Dr. Gardiner C. Means and his staff with regard to the present state of American economy. We shall deal exclusively with the forecast of the chances for a survival of the democratic principle that is revealed in the general statements contained in the introduction and conclusion. [\[2\]](#)

The authors of the report start from impressive description of the well-known "failure" of the present economic system to use its gigantic resources effectively : "Resources are wasted or used ineffectively as parts of the organization get out of adjustment with each other, or as the organization fails to adjust to new conditions; as individuals fail to find, or are prevented

from finding, the most useful field of activity; as material resources are unused, or as their effective use is impeded by human barriers; and as the most effective technology is not used or its use is prevented."They attempt to estimate and picture the "magnitude of wastes" that resulted from this failure both during the depression and the preceding non-depression years. According to this estimate the depression loss in national income due to the idleness of men and machines from 1929 to 1937 was "in the magnitude of 200 billion dollars worth of goods and services." This extra income would have been enough to provide "a new \$6,000 house for every family in the country." At this cost "the entire railroad system of the country could have been scrapped and rebuilt five times over." It is equivalent to the cost of rebuilding the whole of the existing "agricultural and industrial plant" of the nation. [3] Even in the peak pre-depression year, 1929, both production and national income could have been increased 19 percent by merely putting to work the men and machines that were idle in that year, even without the introduction of improved techniques of production. [4]The authors then go on to deal with the "impact" of this waste upon the community as reflected in the development of a "sense of social frustration" and in "justified social unrest and unavoidable friction." They begin, however to show a wavering in their democratic convictions when they proceed, in the following paragraph to discuss the "tremendous opportunity" and the "great challenge" that this very waste of resources and manpower presents for the American nation today. The "great challenge" for democracy assumes at once the sinister features of an impending tragedy : "How long this opportunity will be open to the American democracy involves a serious question. The opportunity for a higher standard of living

is so great, the social frustration from the failure to obtain it so real, that other means will undoubtedly be sought if a democratic solution is not worked out. The time for finding such a solution is not unlimited." And they reveal their inmost sentiment as to the probabilities of a "democratic solution" of that tremendous task by the very language in which they finally "state the problem" arising from the results of their investigation :This problem, the basic problem facing economic statesmanship today, can be stated as follows : How can we get effective use of our resources, YET, AT THE SAME TIME preserve the underlying values in our tradition of liberty and democracy ? How can we employ our unemployed, how can we use our plant and equipment to the full, how can we take advantage of the modern technology, YET IN ALL THIS make the individual the source of value and individual fulfilment in society the basic objective ? How can we obtain effective organization of resources YET AT THE SAME TIME retain the maximum freedom of individual action ?This same defeatistic sentiment pervades, as it were, the whole of this otherwise most valuable official document. There is nowhere an unambiguous attempt to claim for the democratic principles any material value or usefulness for restoring the good old days of capitalism or for bringing about an even greater expansion for the productive forces of the American economic community. There is nothing but a sentimental craving for a policy that would not be altogether incompatible with a more or less verbal allegiance to a few remnants of the "democratic" and "liberal" traditions and what might yet work as well as the fascist methods, which they never question. Thus the whole of the proud attempt to conquer a new world of prosperity and of full use of resources and manpower for American democracy boils down to a

pronouncement about the result of the impending struggle between democracy and fascism that in its sinister ambiguity rivals the well-known oracle of the priestess of Delphi. "If Croesus sets out to conquer the country beyond the Halys, he will destroy a great empire," said the oracle of ancient Greece. "If the present government of the USA sets out to conquer the problems of unused resources and mass unemployment, it will destroy an important form of government," echoes the economic oracle of our time. A New Fighting GroundIt appears from the preceding observations that the workers are quite right if they think twice before they listen to the generous invitations extended to them from every quarter, including most of their former leaders, to forget for the time being about their own complaints against capital and to join wholeheartedly the fight against the common enemy. The, workers cannot participate in "democracy's fight against fascism" for the simple reason that there is no such fight. To fight against fascism means for the workers in the hitherto democratic countries to fight first of all against the democratic branch of fascism within their own countries. To begin their own fight against the new and more oppressive form of capitalism that is concealed in the various forms of pseudo-socialism offered to them today, they have first to free themselves from the idea that it might still be possible for present-day capitalism to "turn the clock back" and to return to traditional pre-fascist capitalism. They must learn to fight fascism on its own ground which, as we have said before, is entirely different from the very popular, but in fact self-destructive, advice that the anti-fascists should learn to fight fascism by adopting fascist methods.

To step from the ground on which the workers' class struggle against capitalism was waged in the preceding epoch to the ground on which it must be continued today presupposes full insight into a historical fact that is not less a fact because it has served as a theoretical basis for the claims of fascism. This historical fact that has finally arrived today can be described, as a first approach, either negatively or positively, in any of the following terms : End of the Market, End of Competitive Capitalism, "End of Economic Man"; Triumph of Bureaucracy, of Administrative Rule, of Monopoly Capitalism; Era of Russian Four Year Plans, Italian Wheat Battles, German "Wehrwirtschaft"; Triumph of State Capitalism over Private Property and Individual Enterprise.

The tendency toward this transformation was first envisaged by the early socialists in their criticism of the millennial hopes of the bourgeois apostles of free trade. It was later more and more neglected by the socialist writers in their attempt to adopt their theories to the needs of the progressive fractions of the bourgeoisie. When it was finally revived, around the turn of the present century, it was already destined as we can see today -- to serve not the purposes of the socialist revolution, but rather the aims of the imperceptibly growing counterrevolution. We shall presently see that today any further denial of the accomplished fact has become impossible even for hard-boiled defenders of the traditional dreams of bourgeois economy.

### The Corporate Community

For a more detailed description and factual confirmation of this general statement we turn again to the above

discussed document which contains, as far as the writer can see, by far the most comprehensive, the most reliable and, at the same time, the most dramatically presented information on the subject. When this government report on the structure of the American economy first became known to the American public, the chief sensation was created by its careful statistical proof that even the boldest estimates previously made were far below the degree of monopolistic concentration actually reached by American economy. According to the statistics given and explained in Chapters 7 and 9 and Appendices 9-13 of the report -- that bring up-to-date the figures published in 1930 by Berle and Means in *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* -- the one hundred largest manufacturing companies of this country in 1935 employed 20.7 percent of all the manpower engaged in manufacturing; accounted for 32.4 percent of the value of products reported by all manufacturing plants; and contributed 24.7 percent of all the value added in manufacturing activity.

Although there are some cases in which these large corporations comprise almost the whole of a particular industry (steel, petroleum, refining, rubber and cigarette manufacturing), manufacturing industries on the average cannot compete with the much higher degree of concentration that has been reached by the railroads and public utilities. Of the total number of the two hundred "largest non-financial corporations that are listed in the report, approximately half are railroads and utilities; the railroads included in this list in 1935 operated over 90 percent of the railroad mileage of the country, while the electric utilities accounted for 80 percent of the electric power production, for most of the telephone and telegraph services of the USA, and a large part of the



rapid transit facilities of New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, and Baltimore. No less striking are the figures relating to the fifty "largest financial corporations" including thirty banks, seventeen life-insurance companies, and three investment trusts, each with assets of over 200 million dollars. The thirty banks together hold 34.3 percent of the banking assets of the country outside of the Federal Reserve Banks, while the seventeen life-insurance companies account for over 81.5 percent of the assets of all life-insurance companies. There is an equally high degree of concentration in the field of government activities. The twenty "largest government units" together employ 46 percent of all the manpower employed in government, excluding work-relief programs. The largest of these, the federal government, is by far the largest single "corporation" in the country; the post office alone employed in 1935 nearly as many persons as the largest corporate employer.

All these figures, however, do not tell half the story of American business concentration. Much more is shown by a breakdown of the total number into major industrial categories and by an investigation into the growth of the relative importance of all non-financial corporations in 1909 to over fifty four percent in 1933. And the whole picture begins to reveal its true significance when the report endeavours to show the tremendous degree of interrelationships through which "the managements of most of the larger corporations are brought together in what might be called the corporate community" [emphasis by K. K.]. This is indeed a picture that might cure the illusions of the most innocent believers in that "spirit of free enterprise" that must be protected by "all means short of war" from the sinister threat of

"totalitarianism." There is very little difference between that economic "co-ordination" that is achieved, and sometimes not achieved, by the political decrees of victorious nazism, fascism, and bolshevism, and this new "corporate community" that has been created by a slow but relentless process in this country through the system of "interlocking directorates," through the activities of the major financial institutions, through particular interest groupings, through firms rendering legal, accounting, and similar services to the larger corporations, through "intercorporate stockholdings," and a number of other devices.

After a careful study of the working of all these different devices the report reaches its climax by disclosing that no less than 106 of the aforesaid 250 largest industrial and financial corporations and nearly two-thirds of their combined assets are controlled by, only "eight more or less clearly defined interest groups." (Even this estimate, as pointed out by, the authors themselves, falls far short of reality : "No attempt is made to include the assets of smaller corporations falling within the same sphere of influence, though many such could be named." Other and more important shortcomings will be discussed below.) To give an idea of the significance of this fact, we must restrict ourselves to a few data concerning each of those eight mammoth groups.

(1) Morgan-First National. Includes thirteen industrial corporations, twelve utilities, eleven major railroads or railroad systems (controlling 26 percent of the railroad mileage of the country), and five banks. Total assets :

(Millions  
of  
dollars)

Industrials	3,920
Utilities	12,191
Rails	9,678
Banks	1421
Total	30,210

(2) Rockefeller. Controls six oil companies (successors to the dissolved Standard Oil Co.) representing 4,262 million dollars, or more than half of the total assets of the oil industry, and one bank (Chase National, the country's largest bank; assets : 2,351 million dollars) .

(3) Kuhn, Loeb. Controls thirteen major railroads or railroad systems (22 percent of the railroad mileage of the country), one utility, and one bank. Total assets : 10,853 million dollars.

(4) Mellon. Controls about nine industrial corporations, one railroad, two utilities, two banks. Total assets : 3,332 million dollars.

(5) Chicago group. Controls on the basis of interlocking directorates four industrial corporations, three utilities, four banks. Total assets : 4,266 million dollars.

(6) Du Pont. Comprises three top rank industrial corporations and one bank. Total assets : 2,628 million dollars.

(7) Cleveland group. The Mather interests control through the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Co. the four so-called independent steel companies; control two other industrial corporations and one bank, Total assets : 1,404 million dollars.

(8) Boston group. Includes four industrial corporations,

two utilities, one bank. Total assets : 1,719 million dollars.

In interpreting this list, the reader should have in mind that it is far from complete. As we have seen, the authors, on principle, have only considered interconnections between the 250 largest non-financial and financial corporations. Even within these limits, many corporations that are "fairly closely related with one or another of these groups" have been left out for technical reasons. For example, the giant International Paper and Power Corporation that is equally closely related to Boston and Rockefeller was therefore assigned to neither the Boston nor the Rockefeller groups. Ten equally important links between the eight big interest groups are considered in the appendix but are only slightly touched upon in the body of the report.

Even with these restrictions, the corporate community as described in this report appears as a momentous concentration of economic and thus also of political power. The report does not deny the importance of the controls that the corporate community "exercises over the policies of the larger corporations, through them affecting the whole American economy." It is equally aware of their political significance. Just as the controls exercised by the organized interest groups -- the big associations of capital and labor, by organizations of farmers and of consumers -operate through government, so also do "some of the controls exercised by the corporate community operate through government." Yet, says the report : "it is not intended to imply that these aggregations of capital ever act as a unit under the rule of individual or oligarchic dictatorships. The social and economic content of the relationships which bind them

together is far more subtle and varied than this." It would not be easy to determine just what degree of subtlety and variety separates a democratic from a dictatorial exercise of an uncontrolled power. We have to trust, instead, the judgement of our experts when they tell us that the corporate community as existing in the USA today is not a dictatorship; it is only a "concentration of the economic leadership in the hands of a few."

### The End of the Market

The foregoing description of the degree of concentration reached by, American capitalism does not by itself answer the crucial question as to whether the present structure of this economy still conforms to the traditional principles of "democratic" capitalism, or whether it already, assumes the characteristic features of present-day Nazi, fascist, and Bolshevik economics. Recent history has shown that a "totalitarian" form of government could just as well be imposed upon the comparatively, backward economies of Russia, Italy, Spain, and so on as upon that most highly, concentrated type of capitalist economy which existed in Germany. On the other hand it would be "theoretically" possible to imagine, a development by which a highly concentrated capitalist economy would still retain, in an unaltered form, the whole of the internal structure of nineteenth-century capitalism.

The actual truth that is revealed in another and, to the writer, most significant part of Dr. Means' report is that this miracle has not happened and that, on the contrary, the external change of the structure of the American economy has been accompanied by an even more

incisive transformation in its internal structure and operating policies.

American economy today no longer receives its decisive impulses from the competition of individual enterprises in an uncontrolled ("free") market, but has become, by and large, a manipulated system. Goods are still produced as commodities. There is still something that is called "prices," and there are still the three capitalist "markets" -- goods, labor, and securities. There even remain some sizeable areas in which the "price of an article can still act, after a fashion, as a regulator of production." "The proportion of cotton and corn planted on Arkansas farms varies from year to year with changing relationships in the prices of those crops, and reflects the operation of markets as an organizing influence." Yet outside of those increasingly restricted areas -- agricultural products and listed securities -- the bulk of "prices," including labor rates, are no longer established in free markets. They are manipulated by administrative decisions that are influenced to a varying extent, but no longer -- as of old -- strictly and directly determined by market conditions. This appears, for example, in the wholesale price of automobiles and agricultural implements that are set and changed from time to time by the respective manufacturers, and thus result from "administrative" decisions.

The reader should be careful here to distinguish between those elements within the "administrative" organization of production that have long existed and have changed in degree of importance only, and that other aspect that is entirely new and is still widely ignored by traditionally minded economists.

The mere fact that administrative rule replaces the mechanism of the market in the coordination of economic activities within the limits of a single enterprise has no novelty for the Marxist. It is true that even this fact assumes a new importance under conditions of modern concentration as in the case of America's largest enterprise, A.T.&T., the activities of over 450,000 persons are coordinated within one administrative system. It is also true that there has been a great increase in the proportion in which the economic activities of the producing community are administratively coordinated (within single enterprises) as against that in which they are still coordinated through the shifting of prices and the interaction of a large number of independent sellers and buyers in the market.

The decisive problem, however, that has to be investigated if one wants to grasp the process that has recently undermined the traditional democratic character of American society is contained in the question of how far that change of proportion reflects itself in the whole structure and operation of present-day American economy. It is the great merit of the authors of this report that they have investigated that decisive problem to the full and that they are absolutely unambiguous and outspoken about the results of their investigation. According to them American economy as a whole has been transformed "from one regulated by impersonal competition to one in which policies are administratively determined."

They never tire of repeating this most important result and of describing in most impressive terms the "significance of the extensive role of administrative prices" that appears to be "inherent in the modern

economy" and forms "an integral part of the structure of economic activity." They insist again and again that "however much of a role price administration may have played in the earlier years of this century, there can be little question that it plays a dominant role today." [5]

There is no space here to describe in detail the 101 methods and devices by which prices, apparently settled by the law of supply and demand in an open market, are in fact manipulated and controlled by very definite "price policies" of the decisive strata of the "corporate community." These controls may originate from one or from different foci of control. "The threads of control over labor policy may be divided between the corporation and a labor union, some threads focusing in the corporate management and some in the union officials; threads of control over some aspects of policy may rest with the government bodies, as in the case of minimum working standards or public utility regulations; still other threads may rest with some dominant buyer, or a supplier of raw materials or of services, etc." They may, furthermore, be direct and immediate or indirect and intangible. "They may operate simply through establishing a climate of opinion within which policies are developed."

They may be entirely informal or may be accomplished by a formal setting, and in many cases the formal and the actual lines of control will differ. They arise from three main sources : possession of one or more of the "factors of production," possession of liquid assets, and most important, position in relation to a functioning operation.

The main thing to understand is that the new structure of controls that emerges from these various forms of non-



market control (1) is entirely a child of modern times, and (2) it has come to stay for a very, long time.

The controls thus exercised over prices and markets on a nation-wide scale by the leading members of the industrial community far surpass in importance the well-known non-market controls heretofore exercised by financial institutions through the handling of investment funds -- the so-called supremacy of finance capital. In fact, as shown by recent investigations not yet included in this report, most of the largest business firms are today "self-financing" and no longer depend on the aid of the moneylender and his organizations. The strictly "private" controls exercised by the administrative acts of the members of the corporate community are even more important than the old and new forms of non-market controls which are exercised by government (federal, state, and local) through its fiscal policies, through the protection of property and enforcement of contracts, and so forth.

Nor can the influence exerted on the market by the action of some powerful pressure groups any longer be regarded as a transitory and un-"normal" encroachment on the normal activities of trade -- any more than the influences exerted on the U.S. Congress by political pressure groups in Washington can be considered an anomaly. The constitution of the corporate community has become the real constitution of the U.S.

There remains the question of the working of this new system. How can "administration-dominated prices" that are changed from time to time replace the practically unlimited flexibility of market prices both in their reaction to the different phases of the industrial cycle

(prosperity and depression) and to the technologically-conditioned structural changes ? Dr. Means and his staff are inclined to take a very optimistic attitude toward the working of the new type of administration-dominated prices. They clearly see certain "violent distortions" that arose during the years of the last depression and the succeeding "recovery" from the differential. behaviour of the two kinds of prices co-existing in American economy : "Between 1929 and 1932 there was a considerable drop in the wholesale price index, but this drop was made up of a violent drop in the prices of market-dominated commodities, and there was only a very small or no drop at all for the bulk of the prices which are subject to extensive administrative control. In the recovery period of 1932 to 1937, much of this distortion was eliminated [perhaps new distortions were created ? -K. K.] by the large increases in the market-dominated prices and the relatively small increase in the bulk of administration-dominated prices."

Yet they do not blame this disturbance on the new phenomenon of administration-control of prices. They rather take it for granted that the market, though "theoretically" still able to act as an organizing influence, does in fact no longer act in that beneficial manner. On the other hand, they have proved to their own satisfaction that the degree of flexibility which results from the administrative regulation of the bulk of the prices of goods, labor and securities appears sufficient to allow the gradual readjustment of price relationships to reflect the gradual changes in wants, in resources, and in techniques of production, if the level of economic activity were reasonably well maintained" [emphasis by K. K.]. Thus to the authors of this report, "the serious distortions in the price structure resulting from the

differential sensitivity of prices to depression influences reflect a disorganizing rather than an organizing role that the market can play" (p. 152).

This statement might be acceptable to us who are equally convinced -- though from an altogether opposite viewpoint -- of the impossibility of retaining or restoring the traditional forms of capitalist economy. It seems, however, that they take a lot for granted if they assume that the level of economic activity could be reasonably well maintained under existing conditions of the "democratic" society. They do not tell us in what way they think that this condition will be better fulfilled in the near future than it has been during the recent past. It is quite possible that this omission betrays on the part of the authors an unconscious anticipation of a future dictator who will fill this apparent gap in the structure of the American economy. The only hint of a solution of this crucial problem that we were able to discover in the report is its pathetic appeal to "an increased understanding of the problem on the part of leaders of business, labor leaders, farm leaders, political leaders, and other leaders of public thinking."

#### The Viewpoint of the Workers

We do not propose to discuss the "task" of the workers. The workers have already too long done other people's tasks, imposed on them under the high-sounding names of humanity, of human progress, of justice, and freedom, and what not. It is one of the redeeming features of a bad situation that some of the illusions, hitherto surviving among the working class from their past participation in the revolutionary fight of the bourgeoisie against feudal

society, have finally, been exploded. The only "task" for the workers, as for every other class, is to look out for themselves.

The first thing then that the workers can do is to make absolutely, clear to themselves that the old system of "free trade, " "free competition," and "democracy" has actually come to an end. It does not matter so much whether we describe the new system that has replaced it in terms of "monopoly capitalism," "state capitalism" or "a corporate state." The last term seems most appropriate to the writer for the reason that it recalls at once the name that was given to the new totalitarian form of society after the rise of fascism in Italy twenty years ago. There is, however, a difference. The corporate community of the US represents as yet only the "economic basis" of a full fledged totalitarian system, and not its political and ideological superstructure. On the other hand, one might say that in backward countries like Italy and Spain there exists as yet only the totalitarian superstructure, without a fully developed economic basis.

As to "monopoly," there is no doubt that every increasing concentration of capital is tantamount to an increase in monopoly. The term itself, however, has changed its meaning since a predominantly competitive economy has been superseded by a predominantly monopolistic system. As long as "monopoly" was regarded as an exception, if not an abuse, the emphasis was on the "excessive" and "unfair" profits derived from a monopolistic position within an otherwise competitive economy. An observation made by Marx at an early time in his critique of Proudhon has recently been unconsciously accepted by an increasing number of

bourgeois economists. "Competition," said Marx, "implies monopoly, and monopoly implies competition." Thus the terms "monopoly" and "competition" have recently been redefined to refer to the "elements of a situation" rather than to the situation itself, which as a whole is neither entirely monopolistic nor entirely competitive. In a sense it can be said today that all (or most) profits are essentially monopolistic profits, just as the bulk of prices have become monopolistic prices. Monopoly has become not an exceptional but general condition of present-day economy.

Thus it is quite correct to describe the historical process here discussed as a transition from competitive to monopolistic capitalism; but the term monopoly has, by the very generalization of the condition to which it refers, become an entirely descriptive term, no longer fit to arouse any particular moral indignation.

Similarly, there is no serious harm in describing American economy as a system of "state capitalism." Yet this description does not fit American conditions so well as it does the general pattern of German and other European societies. In spite of the special powers of coercion invested in the political authorities alone, the administrative decisions emanating from various economic enterprises controlled by the government have become the most important influences exerted by the government on the functioning of the U.S. economy. They are co-ordinated with all other forms of non-market controls which, together with the still-existing remainders of market controls, constitute the essential features of the "control structure" of the present economic system. The authors of the report use the terms "administration," "administrative rules," and so on

indifferently with reference to all kinds of non-market controls whether they originate from governmental agencies, from different kinds of organizations based on business interests (or for that matter on labor, farmer, consumer interests) or from private firms and combines. There is no doubt that the position of the government will be considerably strengthened in the case of war. But even this would not be a decisive reason to call the existing system of American economy a "state capitalism" as the same condition will occur in all countries at war whether they are backward or fully developed, "competitive" or "monopolistic" whether they are based on a scattered or a concentrated system of capitalist production.

The second thing the workers may be expected to do, once the importance of the change in the basic conditions of capitalist economy has been fully experienced and grasped by them, is to reshuffle their hitherto most cherished revolutionary and class ideas. When Marx described capitalist society as being fundamentally a "production of commodities" this term included for him - and was meant to include for all those who would be able to understand the peculiar "dialectical" slang of the old Hegelian philosophy -- the whole of the suppression and exploitation of the workers in a fully developed capitalist society, the class struggle and its increasingly stronger forms, up to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by a socialist society. This is all right as far as it goes, except that today it should be translated into a less mysterious and much more distinct and outspoken language. But Marx's emphasis on "commodity production" included something else and, this time, something that may well have become inadequate for the workers' fight against the two species

of the "corporate state" that exist in the fascist and the so-called democratic countries today.

The emphasis on the principle of commodity production, that is, production for exchange for an anonymous and everextended market, was at the same time an emphasis on the positive and progressive functions that capitalism was to fulfil by expanding modern "civilised" society all over the world and, as Marx said, "Transforming the whole world into one gigantic market for capitalist production." All kinds of illusions were inevitably bound up with that great enterprise that was conducted, as it were, by humanity itself. All problems seemed to be solvable, all contradictions and conflicts transitory, and the greatest happiness for the greatest number ultimately obtainable.

The workers, in all their divisions, had a big share in those illusions of commodity production and their political expression, the illusions of democracy. They shared them with all other suppressed minorities and progressive strata of capitalist society -- Jews, Negroes, pacifists. All "reformism" and "revisionism" that distracted the workers' energies from their revolutionary aims have been based on those illusions. The very advent of fascism in the world and its intrusion into the inner sanctums of traditional democracy has at last destroyed the strength of those illusions. We shall attempt in a later article to trace the positive features of a new program for the workers in their fight against the class enemy in his new and more oppressive form which, at the same time, is more transparent and more exposed to their attack.

#### Notes

[1] For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C.; vii; 396 pp; \$1.00.

[2] Cf. pp. 1-5, 171. All quotations in the following paragraphs, if not otherwise marked, are taken from these pages. [Emphases by K. K.]

[3] Cf. p. 27.

[4] Cf. America's Capacity to Produce, Brookings Institution, p. 422. Quoted -- p. 3.

[5] Cf. pp. 116, 145, 155, 333, etc.



## **A NON-DOGMATIC APPROACH TO MARXISM**

by Karl Korsch

This article originally appeared in *Politics* magazine (New York, May 1946). Other Korsch texts include [Marxism and Philosophy](#) (1923; New Left Books, 1970); *L'Anti-Kautsky* (1929; Champ Libre, 1973); *Karl Marx* (1938; Russell & Russell, 1963); [Ten Theses on Marxism Today](#) (1950); [Three Essays on Marxism](#) (Pluto Press, 1971); and Douglas Kellner (ed.), *Karl Korsch: Revolutionary Theory* (University of Texas, 1977). See also A.R. Giles-Peters's [Karl Korsch: A Marxist Friend of Anarchism](#).

### [CROSSFIRE]

The documents here assembled are not meant as a contribution to the discussion for or against Marxism that has been conducted in this magazine for so many months. There is no use in discussing controversial points in any social theory (not even in that social theory which is commonly described as religion) unless such discussion is part of an existing social struggle. There must be several possibilities of action for the party, group, or class to which the social theory in question refers. The difference may concern social aims, tactics, forms of organization, or the definition of the enemy, of allies, neutrals, or the master plan (if any) to be based on one or another way of judging a given social situation or development. Yet the result of any such materialist

discussion must in all cases “make a difference” in respect to the actual behavior not of an individual nor of a small group of people, but of a veritable collectivity, a social mass. In this materialist sense, it is not even sure that the particular social theory called Marxism has ever been the subject of a discussion in this country.

Various people have been asked from time to time why they are, or why they are not, Marxists, just as they might have been asked why they believe, or do not believe, in God, in science, or morality; in race, class, democracy, victory, peace, or the impending destruction of all civilization by the atom bomb. There has also been some philological and interpretative effort spent on settling the question of “what Marx really meant.” Last but not least, there has been far too much of that most senseless of all discussions which aimed at deciding which particular shade of the theories of Marx, Engels and the several generations of their disciples up to Lenin, Stalin, or, let us say, Leontov, represents the most orthodox version of the Marxist doctrine. Or, one step higher, which of the various methods used at different times by Hegel, Marx, and the Marxists truly deserves to be called the genuine “dialectical” method.

As against that altogether dogmatic approach which had already sterilized the revolutionary Marxist theory in all but a few phases of its century-long development in Europe, and by which the attempted extension of Marxism to the US has been blighted from the very beginning, it is here proposed to revindicate the critical, pragmatic, and activistic element which for all this has never been entirely eliminated from the social theory of Marx and which during the few short phases of its

predominance has made that theory a most efficient weapon of the proletarian class struggle.

The documents reprinted below result in part from an earlier attempt at reemphasizing just this element of the Marxist theory — an attempt that was made by the present writer and a group of associates in Germany in the early thirties and which was then temporarily interrupted by the anti-Marxist violence of the Hitler government. Of the four documents two date still farther back to similar attempts that had been made in 1894 and 1902 by such non-dogmatic Marxists as Lenin and Georges Sorel. They were used as models and as points of departure by the group of 1931 when it started on its new attempt at de-dogmatizing and reactivating the Marxian theory.

The Lenin piece of 1894 (*Document III*) was directed against a book in which the economic and sociological theories of the famous Narodniki theorist, Mikhailovski, had been critically attacked by the then “Marxist” (later, bourgeois) writer, Peter Struve. Of this important work of Lenin, unfortunately only a small part has appeared in English (*Selected Works of Lenin*, vol. I) and that part does not include the chapter from which we have taken the piece printed below. The particular interest of our document lies in the fact that just on that occasion Lenin, himself a materialist critic of the idealist “subjectivism” of the Narodniki, found himself in a position in which he had to extend his materialist criticism, with equal fervor, to the abstract and lifeless “objectivism” of Struve. In order to make Lenin’s argument fully understandable, we quote the sentence of Struve which aroused Lenin’s ire. Struve had found fault with Mikhailovski’s opinion that there are “no unsurmountable historical tendencies

which serve as starting points as well as obligatory limits to the purposive activity of the individual and the social groups.” Lenin is quick in discovering the non-revolutionary implications of this Struvean comment on Mikhailovski. “This,” says Lenin, “is the language of an objectivist, and not that of a Marxist (materialist).” And from this point of departure, Lenin embarks on his demonstration of the important differences which separate the principles of the “Objectivists” on the one hand, from those of the “Marxists” (Materialists) on the other hand.

*Document IV* tries to bring out more distinctly the non-dogmatic character of Lenin’s antithesis to Struve’s objectivistic version of the traditional Marxist doctrine. For this purpose and for a series of further experiments in loosening up and de-dogmatizing certain parts of the Marxist theory, the group of 1931 made use of the similar experiment made by Sorel in 1902. According to Sorel, the six theses reproduced in *Document II* below result from a process of “extracting the strictly scientific elements of history from the theory of historical materialism.” In this critical reformulation of historical materialism by one of the most scientific and most pragmatically minded interpreters of Marxism in modern times, the least important point is, in the view of the writer, Sorel’s special emphasis on the role of legal concepts and the legal profession. What really matters is the attempt to clarify the various concatenations that exist between the general terms of the materialist theory and of which the law and its professional exploiters seem to be only one of a number of possible illustrations. Most important, however, is the form in which Sorel has changed into a positive inspiration for unfettered scientific research what till then must have seemed to

many historians a somewhat authoritarian laying down of the rules of writing history. (A different impression might have been derived, perhaps, from a closer acquaintance with the remarkably free application that had been made of the new “critical and materialist method” by Marx himself. Yet the new weapon of the revolutionary class struggle had already lost much of its critical edge in the hands of the first generation of the Marxist scholars at the time of Sorel’s writing. And it is no secret that since then revolutionary Marxism has lost out completely against the “stabilizing” influences that were expressed theoretically in the growth of the old and the new Marx orthodoxy — from Kautsky to Stalin. So the Sorelian operation has to be performed once more.)

Finally, we have added a document which is meant to do for the famous “dialectical method” what Sorel and Lenin did for historical materialism. The “Theses on Hegel and Revolution” translated in *Document I* were first written in German for the centenary of Hegel’s death, in 1931. As will be seen, they approach from a totally opposite direction the whole tangle of difficulties which beset the problem of the Hegelian dialectic and its (modified or unmodified) use by Marx and Engels. Dialectics is here considered not as a kind of super-logic, that is, not as a set of rules to be applied by individual thinkers in the process of thinking — just like ordinary logic, and distinguished from the latter only in the sense in which so-called “higher” mathematics is distinguished from those simpler and, in fact, long outdated rules which are taught as “elementary mathematics” in our schools today. It is treated rather as a number of characteristic phenomena that can be observed from without in the sequence and development of thoughts in a given historical period.

The first “non-dogmatic” result of this changed approach is that a man does not become a revolutionary by studying dialectics but, on the contrary, the revolutionary change in human society affects among other things also the way in which the people of a particular period tend to produce and to exchange their thoughts. Materialist dialectics, then, is the historical investigation of the manner in which in a given revolutionary period, and during the different phases of that period, particular social classes, groups, individuals form and accept new words and ideas. It deals with the often unusual and remarkable forms in which they connect their own and other people’s thoughts and cooperate in disintegrating the existing closed systems of knowledge and in replacing them by other and more flexible systems or, in the most favorable case, by no system at all but by a new and completely unfettered movement of free thought passing rapidly through the changing phases of a more or less continuous or discontinuous development.

Secondly, it appears by implication (from theses II and III) that there is no reason to boast of the fact that both Marx and Lenin, after a first violent criticism and repudiation of the old Hegelian “dialectic,” have returned at a later stage, in a mood of disenchantment and partial frustration, to a very little qualified acceptance of that same philosophical method that, at its best, had reflected the bourgeois revolution of an earlier period. Here as in many other respects, the unfettered development of the Marxian theory does not point backwards to old bourgeois philosophies and ideas, but forward to a non-dogmatic and non-authoritarian, scientific and activistic use of the Marxian as well as all

other theoretical formulations of the collective experience of the working class.

## **DOCUMENT I** *Theses on Hegel and Revolution*

**(Karl Korsch, 1931)**

I. The Hegelian philosophy and its dialectical method cannot be understood without taking into account its relationship to revolution.

1) It originated historically from a revolutionary movement.

2) It fulfilled the task of giving to that movement its conceptual expression.

3) Dialectical thought is revolutionary even in its form:

a) turning away from the immediately given — radical break with the hitherto existing — “standing on the head” — new beginning;

b) principle of contradiction and negation;

c) principle of permanent change and development — of the “qualitative leap.”

4) Once the revolutionary task is out of the way and the new society fully established, the revolutionary dialectical method inevitably disappears from its philosophy and science.

II. The Hegelian philosophy and its dialectical method cannot be criticized without taking into account its

relationship to the particular historical conditions of the revolutionary movement of the time.

1) It is a philosophy not of revolution in general, but of the bourgeois revolution of the 17th and 18th centuries.

2) Even as a philosophy of the bourgeois revolution, it does not reflect the entire process of that revolution, but only its concluding phase. It is thus a philosophy not of the revolution, but of the restoration.

3) This twofold historical nature of the Hegelian dialectic appears formally in a twofold limitation of its revolutionary character.

a) The Hegelian dialectic though dissolving all pre-existing fixations, results in the end in a new fixation: it becomes an absolute itself and, at the same time, “absolutizes” the whole dogmatic content of the Hegelian philosophical system that had been based on it.

b) The revolutionary point of the dialectical approach is ultimately bent back to the “circle,” that is, to a conceptual reinstatement of the immediately given reality, to a reconciliation with that reality, and to a glorification of existing conditions.

III. The attempt made by the founders of scientific socialism to salvage the high art of dialectical thinking by transplanting it from the German idealist philosophy to the materialist conception of nature and history, from the bourgeois to the proletarian theory of revolution, appears, both historically and theoretically, as a transitory step only. What has been achieved is a theory not of the proletarian revolution developing on its own basis, but of a proletarian revolution that has just



emerged from the bourgeois revolution; a theory which therefore in every respect, in content and in method, is still tainted with the birthmarks of Jacobinism, that is, of the revolutionary theory of the bourgeoisie.

**DOCUMENT II** *Theses on the Materialistic Conception of History*

**(Submitted to the 1902 Convention of the Société Française de Philosophie, by Georges Sorel**

1) For investigating a period (of history) it is of great advantage to find out how society is divided in classes; the latter are distinguished by the essential legal concepts connected with the way in which incomes are formed in each group.

2) It is advisable to dismiss all atomistic explanations; it is not worthwhile to inquire how the links between individual psychologies are formed. What can be observed directly are those links themselves, that which refers to the masses. The thoughts and activities of individuals are fully understandable only by their connection with the movements of the masses.

3) Much light is thrown on history if one is able to clarify the concatenation between the system of productive forces, the organization of labor, and the social relations that rule production.

4) Religious and philosophical doctrines have traditional sources; yet in spite of their tendency to organize

themselves in systems totally closed to all outside influences, they are usually somehow connected with the social conditions of the period. From this viewpoint, they appear as mental reflections of the conditions of life and often as attempts to explain history by a doctrine of faith.

5) The history of a doctrine will be fully clarified only when it can be connected with the history of a social group that makes it its task to develop and apply that particular doctrine (influence of the legal profession).

6) Assuming that revolutions do not have the effect to make possible a greater extension of the productive forces that are obstructed in their development by an outdated legislation, it is still of the greatest importance to examine a social transformation from this point of view and to investigate how the legal ideas are transformed under the pressure of a universally felt need for economic emancipation.

### **DOCUMENT III** *Materialism Versus Objectivism*

**(Lenin, 1894)**

The objectivist speaks of the necessity of the given historical process; the materialist (Marxist) determines exactly the given economic form of society and the antagonistic relations arising from it. The objectivist, in proving the necessity of a given series of facts, always runs the risk to get into the position of an apologist of those facts; the materialist reveals the antagonisms of classes and thereby determines his own position. The

objectivist speaks of “unsurmountable historical tendencies”; the materialist speaks of the class which “directs” the given economic order and thus, at the same time, brings forth one form or another of resistance by the other classes. Thus, the materialist is, on the one hand, more consistent than the objectivist and reaches a more thorough and more comprehensive objectivism. He is not satisfied with pointing to the necessity of the process, but clearly states the economic form of society underlying the content of just that process, and the particular class determining just that necessity. In our case, for example, the materialist would not content himself with referring to “unsurmountable historical tendencies”; he would point to the existence of certain classes which determine the content of the given order and exclude any possibility of a solution but by the action of the producers themselves. On the other hand, the materialist principle implies, as it were, the element of party, by committing itself, in the evaluation of any event, to a direct and open acceptance of the position of a particular social group.

**DOCUMENT IV** *On an Activistic Form of Materialism and on the Class and Partisan Character of Science*

**(Karl Korsch, 1931)**

1) There is little use in confronting the subjectivist doctrine of the decisive role of the individual in the historical process with another and equally abstract doctrine that speaks of the necessity of a given historical process. It is more useful to explore, as precisely as possible, the antagonistic relations that arise from the

material conditions of production of a given economic form of society for the social groups participating in it.

2) Much light is thrown on history by countering every alleged necessity of a historical process with the following questions: a) necessary by the action of which classes? b) which modifications will be necessary in the action of the classes faced by the alleged historical necessity?

3) In the investigation of the antagonistic relations existing between the various classes and class fractions of an economic form of society, it is advisable to consider not only the material but also the ideological forms in which such antagonistic relations occur within the given economic form of society.

4) The content of a doctrine (theoretical system, any set of sentences and operational rules used for the statement and application of a theory or belief) cannot be clarified so long as it is not connected with the content of a given economic form of society and with the material interests of definite classes of that society.

5) There is no need to assume that the objectivity of a doctrine will be impaired by its methodical connection with the material interests and practical activities of definite classes.

6) Whenever a doctrine is not connected with the material interests of a definite class by its own proponents, one will often be justified in assuming that the proponents of such doctrine aim at defending by it the interests of the ruling classes of the society in question. In these cases the theoretical uncovering of the

class function of a given doctrine is equivalent to a practical adoption of the cause of the classes oppressed in that society.

7) From this state of affairs, and from its theoretical recognition, springs the objective and subjective partisan nature of science.

## **TEN THESES ON MARXISM TODAY** **(1950)**

by Karl Korsch

From:

"<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/2379/index.html>"

1. It no longer makes sense to ask to what extent the teaching of Marx and Engels is, today, theoretically acceptable and practically applicable.
2. Today, all attempts to re-establish the Marxist doctrine as a whole in its original function as a theory of the working classes social revolution are reactionary utopias.
3. Though basically ambiguous, there are, however, important aspects of Marxian teaching which in their changing function and applying to different locations have until today retained their effectiveness. Also, the impetus generated by the praxis of the old Marxist labor movement has been presently incorporated into the practical struggles of peoples -and classes.
4. The first step in re-establishing a revolutionary theory and practice consists in breaking with that Marxism which claims to monopolize revolutionary initiative as well as theoretical and practical direction.
5. Marx is today only one among the numerous precursors, founders and developers of the socialist movement of the working class. No less important are

the so-called Utopian Socialists from Thomas More to the present. No less important are the great rivals of Marx, such as Blanqui, and his sworn enemies, such as Proudhon and Bakunin. No less important, in the final result, are the more recent developments such as German revisionism, French syndicalism, and Russian Bolshevism.

6. The following points are particularly critical for Marxism: (a) its dependence on the underdeveloped economic and political conditions in Germany and all the other countries of central and eastern Europe where it was to have political relevance; (b) its unconditional adherence to the political forms of the bourgeois revolution; (c) the unconditional acceptance of the advanced economic conditions of England as a model for the future development of all countries and as objective preconditions for the transition to socialism; to which one should add; (d) the consequences of its repeated desperate and contradictory attempts to break out of these conditions.

7. The results of these conditions are: (a) the overestimation of the state as the decisive instrument of social revolution; (b) the mystical identification of the development of the capitalist economy with the social revolution of the working class; (c) the subsequent ambiguous development of this first form of the Marxian theory of revolution by the artificial grafting onto it of a theory of the communist revolution in two phases; this theory, directed on the one hand against Blanqui, and on the other against Bakunin, whisks away from the present movement the real emancipation of the working class and puts it back into the indefinite future.

8. This is the point for insertion of the Leninist or Bolshevik development; and it is in this new form that Marxism has been transferred to Russia and Asia. Thereby Marxism has been changed; from a revolutionary theory it has become an ideology. This ideology could be and has been used for a variety of different goals.

9. It is from this viewpoint that one comes to judge in a critical spirit the two Russian revolutions of 1917 and 1928, and it is from this viewpoint that one must determine the functions fulfilled by Marxism today in Asia and on a world scale.

10. The control of the workers over the production of their own lives will not come from their occupying the positions, on the international and world markets, abandoned by the self-destroying and so-called free competition of the monopolistic owners of the means of production. This control can only result from a planned intervention by all the classes today excluded from it into a production which today is already tending in every way to be regulated in a monopolistic and planned fashion.

\*Translated by Andrew Giles-Peters. From TELOS # 26 (WINTER 1975-76)